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**Thanks to** Haymarket Pre-Press (Repro), Adam Tomlinson, Callum Limb, Brendan Lacken, Kieran Koszary, Connor Park, Mark Briggs, Anthony Marshall, Shaun White, Christopher Waidelich, Josh Frankland and Richard Scott

**Pictures** PA, Getty Images, Shutterstock, Instagram, Twitter, Offside, Inpho.ie, Sarah Laird, Good Company

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**Circulation enquiries** Frontline Ltd, Midgate House, Midgate, PE1 1TN  
Tel: 01733 555161 **Repro** by Haymarket Pre-Press  
**Printed by** William Gibbons & Sons Ltd, P.O. Box 103, 26 Planetary Road, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 3XT.

FFT is published by Haymarket Media, Bridge House, 69 London Road, Twickenham, TW1 3SP. Tel: +44 (0)20 8267 5009, haymarketgroup.com.  
FFT cannot accept any responsibility for unsolicited contributions, and no part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted without permission. ISSN 1355 0276 EAN 9771355027009

FourFourTwo, ISSN number 1355027X, is published monthly by Haymarket Media Group, Bridge House, 69 London Road, Twickenham, TW1 3SP, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is \$69. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. Subscription records are maintained at Haymarket Media Group, Bridge House, 69 London Road, Twickenham, TW1 3SP, United Kingdom. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

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# EDITOR'S LETTER



@FourFourTwoEd

The last time Zinedine Zidane was on the cover was a little over two years ago when he was still in charge of Real Madrid's second team, Castilla.

He'd endured a torrid first season in management: not only did his young side underperform, he was also slapped with a three-month ban for failing to obtain the relevant coaching badges. That he wasn't shown the door by Los Blancos owed everything to the club's desire – bordering on desperation – for Zidane to eventually take charge of Madrid's first team.

So when he finally got the call to take over from then-boss Rafael Benitez, it was a decision based more on hope than expectation. Everyone hoped he'd do well. No-one expected him to win back-to-back Champions Leagues, let alone start his third season as favourite to make it three on the bounce. Yet that's exactly what he's done. Turn to page 38 to find out how he's gone about masterminding his, and Madrid's, plan for world domination.

Away from the glitz and glamour of Real, David Wagner has impressed as manager of Huddersfield. We caught up with him this month to discuss biology, touchline celebrations and being drunk under the table by his best mate, Jurgen Klopp.

**Hitesh Ratna**  
Editor

# PLAYED A BLINDER



**Paul Brown:** The historian and FFT regular has shared some of his research into the evolution of football fans. "Being a supporter has altered hugely over the game's long history – however, I discovered we have still got plenty in common with our football-loving ancestors."



**Jon Shard:** The snapper headed to Huddersfield to capture the Terriers' miracle-working gaffer. "David Wagner was a pleasure to work with, easy-going and full of positive energy. He even supplied some tea and toast to finish off the morning's photo shoot. Lovely fella."



**James Maw:** Our features editor has spent the past month trying to get his head round analytical model, Expected Goals. "I'd often noticed xG mentioned online but thought deciphering it would be like cracking the enigma code – maybe unsurprisingly, it wasn't."

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"WHERE THE HELL IS SLIGO?"

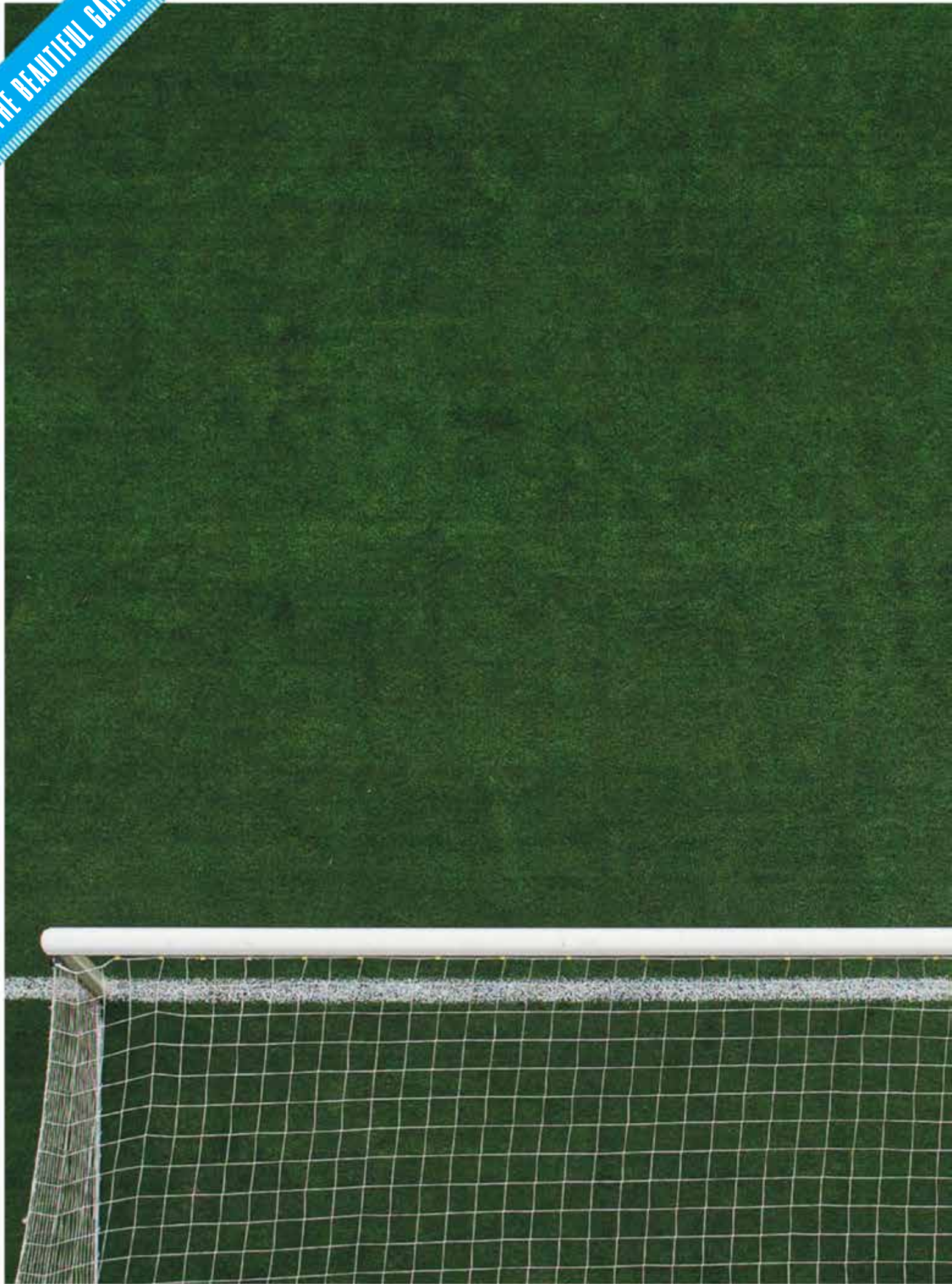
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THE BEAUTIFUL GAME





## “ONE... MORE... STRETCH...”

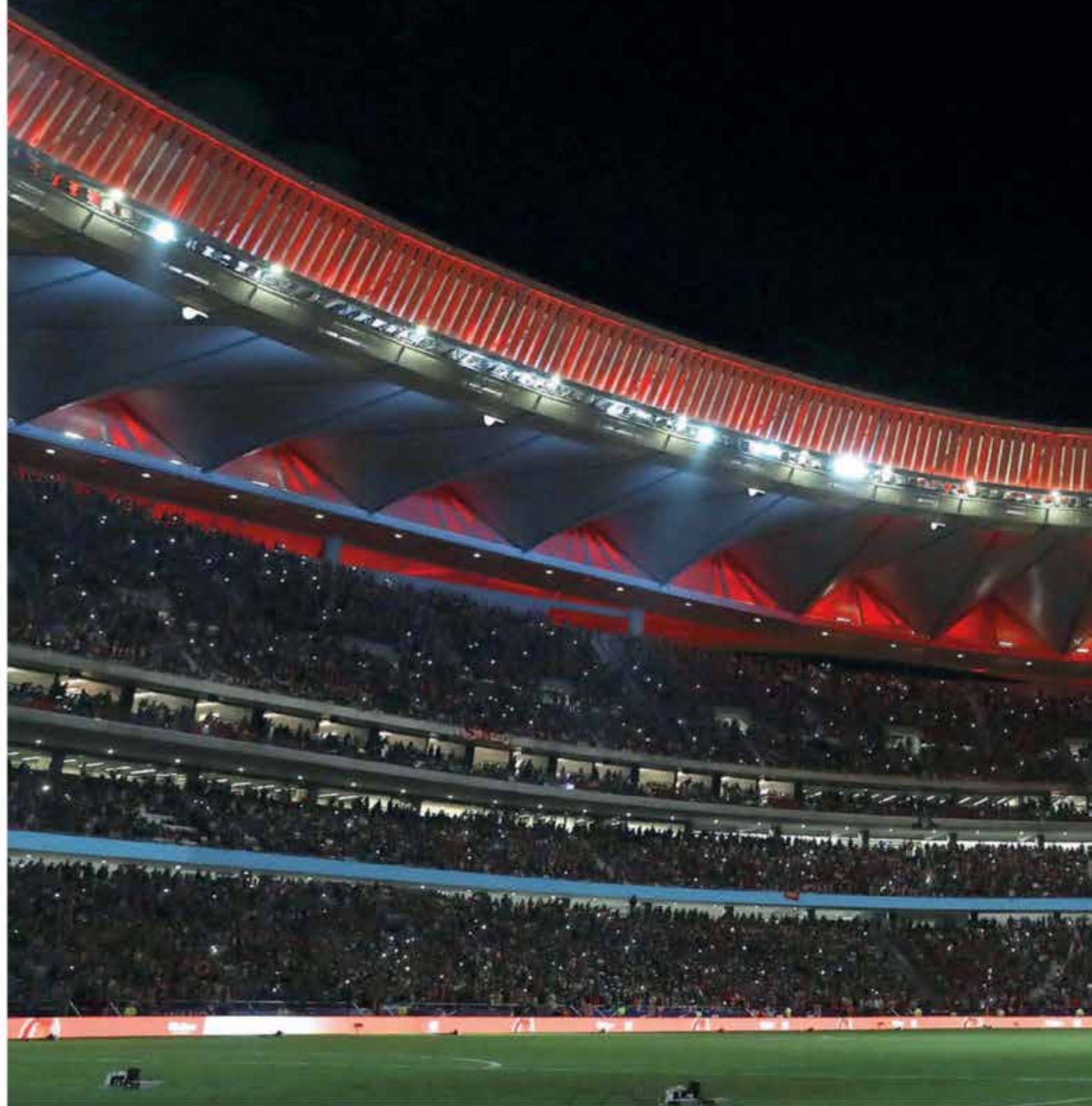
The Stockholm derby between Hammarby and AIK – the best-attended fixture in Scandinavian football – has always been a fiercely contested affair. Despite mixed Allsvenskan seasons, September’s meeting at Hammarby’s Tele2 Arena was no different. Just ask home goalkeeper Johan Wiland, who strained every sinew to keep the score at 1-1 and deny AIK midfielder Stefan Ishizaki from long-range. It wasn’t the Swedish stopper’s only notable intervention, Wiland’s heroics earning him a deserved man-of-the-match award.

**Picture** Nils Petter Nilsson/Ombrello via Getty





THE BEAUTIFUL GAME





## THE WANDA OF YOU

You could forgive Atletico Madrid fans for feeling uneasy at departing the Vicente Calderon – their former home of 51 years – for the out-of-town Wanda Metropolitano over the summer, but they needn't have worried. Los Colchoneros' new ground shone on its debut, first as Antoine Griezmann secured a 1-0 win against Malaga, then with an impressive post-match firework display. "It is not just any goal," the Frenchman said. "This is the best stadium I've ever played in, and I'm not just saying that." Well who are we to argue?

Picture Ballesteros/REX/Shutterstock





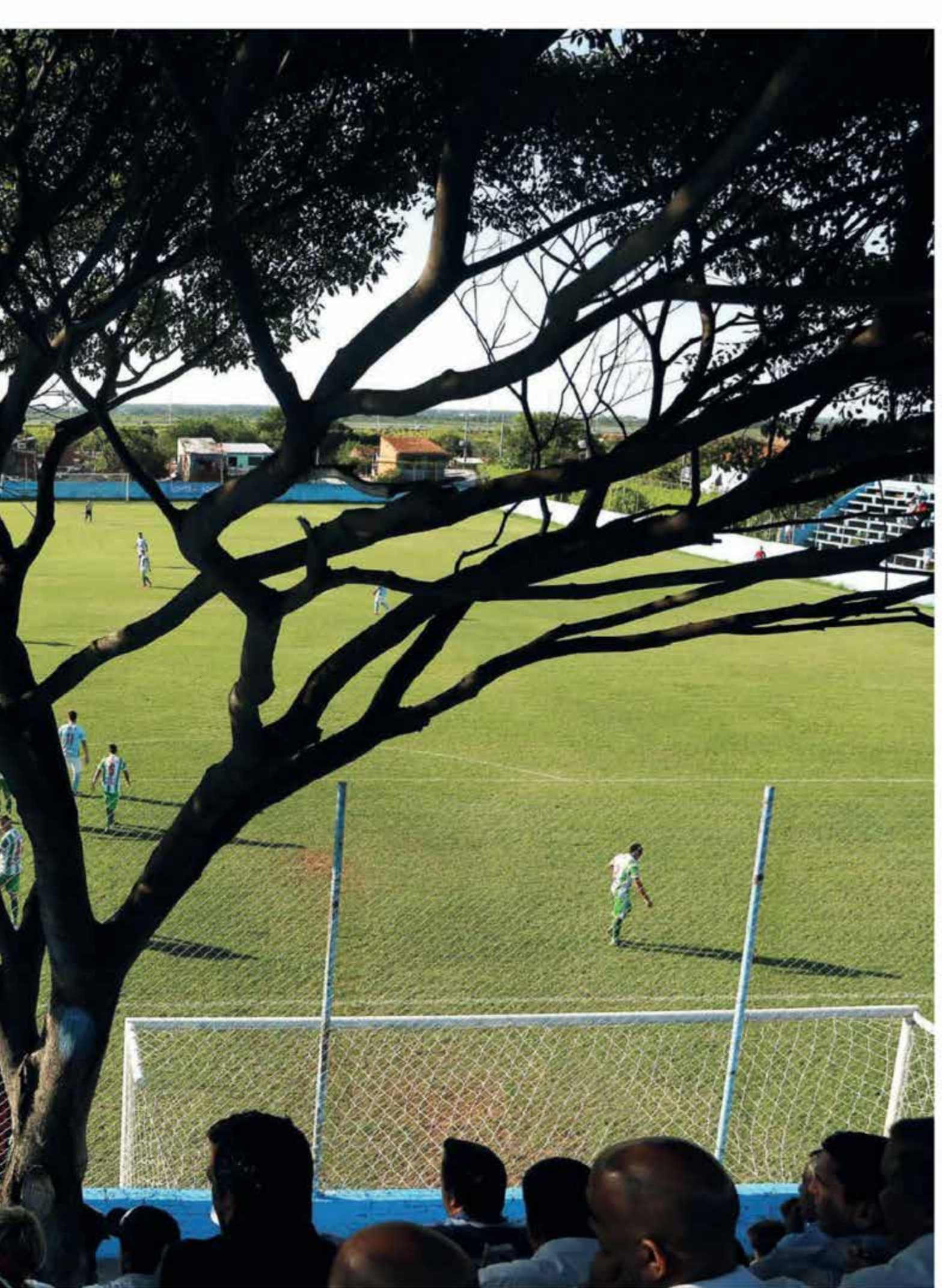
## TREE 1-0 FOOTBALL

Where would football fans be without the humble tree? Locked out of non-league grounds on FA Cup third round day without a hope of watching a giant-killing for a start. Indeed, so integral is this 100-year-old tree to Paraguayan second-tier outfit Resistencia, the club simply built around it when constructing a new stand. "It's probably our most faithful fan," laughed president Roberto Garcete in giving the tree its own shirt and season ticket, "because it's here 24 hours a day." What an in-tree-guing thing to do. Sorry.

Picture AP/REX/Shutterstock











**PARLOUR GAME** What better place to watch Peru against Ecuador than at a funeral? That is what Peruvians did, viewing the crucial World Cup qualifier on a flat screen TV while a coffin lay in the corner of the room



# UPFRONT



Meet 'Bouba', Monaco's tightrope elephant **p25**

Quiz: name the man by his moustache **p30**

Borussia's bargain bucket is just €3.95 **p31**



## ONE-ON-ONE EDWIN VAN DER SAR

Interview Arthur Renard Photography Pim Hendriksen

### WAS VAN GAAL ALWAYS SO BONKERS? WHY DID ARIEL ORTEGA HEADBUTT HIM? DOES HE STILL LAUGH ABOUT JT'S SLIP?

**It's not often a club CEO is the subject of One-on-One – but it's not often that a CEO also happens to have won eight league titles and two European Cups.**

"The way I try to make the club more successful, in terms of raising revenue and winning trophies, is similar to how I captained teams as a keeper," Ajax's Edwin van der Sar says, before outlining the similarities between dominating an 18-yard box and a boardroom. Van der Sar believes that, although he may not

have a strong academic background or years and years of business experience on his CV, his two decades in the game give him invaluable insight into how to run a club. Particularly this club, where he played with distinction from 1990-99, lifting four Eredivisie titles, three Dutch Cups, the UEFA Cup and the Champions League, beating Milan in 1995.

All of that should stand Edwin in good stead when it comes to answering your questions about his glittering career, too.

**Had you always dreamt of becoming a goalkeeper? Do you remember the first time that you ever went in goal?**

*Chris Ambler, Portsmouth*

For the first one and a half years I was an outfield player. But then one day our keeper didn't show up for a game and the coach said to me: "Edwin, you're the tallest, so you go in goal." That went so well that I just ended up staying there.

For many years I'd played for a small amateur side called VV Noordwijk, and I did not expect my dream of becoming a professional to ever come true. When I was around 19, I was approached by Sparta Rotterdam to be the third-choice goalkeeper. However, they only offered to cover my travel expenses, so I chose to stay where I was at Noordwijk. Then a few days later Ajax phoned and asked me to go and sign for them, which I did.

**What are your thoughts on the rise of the sweeper-keeper? You were always good with your feet, did you inspire it?**

*Nav Singh, via Facebook*

During the 1990s we deployed a system at Ajax where I was indeed involved in the build-up play, and it can be an asset if you want to use a certain style of play. Sometimes I believe that people attach too much importance to it. A goalkeeper is there mainly to stop the ball going in.

**Louis van Gaal occasionally appeared a bit eccentric when he was managing in England. Was he like that at Ajax?**

*Laura Matthews, via Facebook*

He hasn't really changed very much, in terms of how he deals with the press or

how he is with people in private – like at a dinner party, for example. I visited one of his training sessions when he was at Manchester United and I still saw a very driven man who is continuously focused on improving his players. The way that he dealt with players, the key elements of his training sessions and his general rules – it was all still very recognisable to me, even after so many years away.

**Do you think another Dutch team will lift the Champions League trophy? It is not very likely now, unfortunately.**

*Andy Green, Merseyside*

[Puffs out cheeks] That will be very, very difficult. Even in my time, like 20 years ago, it was still a massive achievement, but back in those days you had only one club per country and perhaps 16 teams overall in final stages of the competition.

With the new model the romance has somewhat gone, I believe. Even if they implement some new rules, I think the bigger teams will always dominate the tournament as they will overtake all of the other clubs with their huge budgets.

**That Ajax squad was full of players every club in Europe wanted to sign. Who did Juventus have to compete with to finally land your signature?**

*Paul Kelly, via Facebook*

When I left Ajax in 1999, I travelled to Liverpool and spoke to Gerard Houllier. I was shown around Anfield and also met with the chairman and a couple of the players. I thought about it properly, but when Juventus came to the table I came to the conclusion that it would





"AL-FAYED WAS AN ECCENTRIC MAN.  
HE'D WALK ON THE PITCH WAVING  
A SCARF, AND AFTER A GOOD RUN  
OF RESULTS THE PLAYERS WOULD  
GET GIVEN HARRODS HAMPERS"

**CLUBS**

**1990-99** Ajax

**1999-2001** Juventus

**2001-05** Fulham

**2005-11** Manchester United

**2016** VV Noordwijk

**COUNTRY**

**1995-2008** Netherlands



be a bigger challenge to go and play in Italy. But just as I was about to sign for them, Manchester United approached me as well! At that time I talked to the brother of Alex Ferguson, though I was already at an advanced stage with Juve. I liked the thought of going somewhere that had a completely different culture and playing style, but it was a leap into the unknown to move to a Serie A club.

Later, I found out that Ferguson had always been really keen on signing me, but the chairman of United had a deal to sign Mark Bosnich on a free instead. So the idea had always been for me to succeed Peter Schmeichel, but it ended up taking six years longer than planned and they tried out some other keepers in that period. While I was with Fulham I also heard about vague interest from Arsenal but that never materialised into anything concrete, which was a pity at the time. That made it pretty nice when I won a few times against Arsenal with United later on in my career [Laughs].

**What is the most amazing thing you ever saw Zinedine Zidane do during your time together at Juve? And what was the Frenchman like as a person?**

*Will Clay, Yorkshire*

He was a really normal guy. In Italy you also have those flashy boys, with nice cars and expensive clothes, but Zidane was always very casual. You would just see him in jeans and a white T-shirt. He was down to earth but he had incredible quality. If you ever passed or threw the ball out to him and the ball was slightly inaccurate, he would control it in such a way that it was instantly playable. He knew exactly what was going on around him and could pass the ball everywhere. Sometimes it seemed as if he was even quicker with a football, than without it.

**What did you say to Ariel Ortega just before the Argentine headbutted you and saw red at the 1998 World Cup?**

*Darren Walsh, via Facebook*

Ortega had attempted to win a penalty by throwing himself over the leg of Jaap Stam. As he was getting up, I leant over him and 'questioned his parentage'. He got irritated and stood up a bit too fast!

**Do you get nightmares thinking about Francesco Totti's chipped penalty at Euro 2000? Do you think you could've saved it? And how heartbreaking was it to lose in the semi-finals like that?**

*Gustaaf Henriksen, Maastricht*

The chipped penalty wasn't the hardest part of that to handle – a goal is a goal, whether it's done with a chip or not. No, if I had any nightmares about that one game, they would've more likely been about all of those penalties we missed.

We missed two spot-kicks during normal time, then another three in the penalty shootout. Francesco Toldo saved three – two of them from Frank de Boer – and Patrick Kluivert hit a post with one. The other one from Jaap Stam is probably still somewhere in that top tier behind the goal! We managed to miss five out of six penalties, which is probably a few too many if you want to reach a final...

**How did you feel to be ousted by Gigi Buffon at Juve? Looking back, did they make the right choice or do you think they should have just stuck with you?**

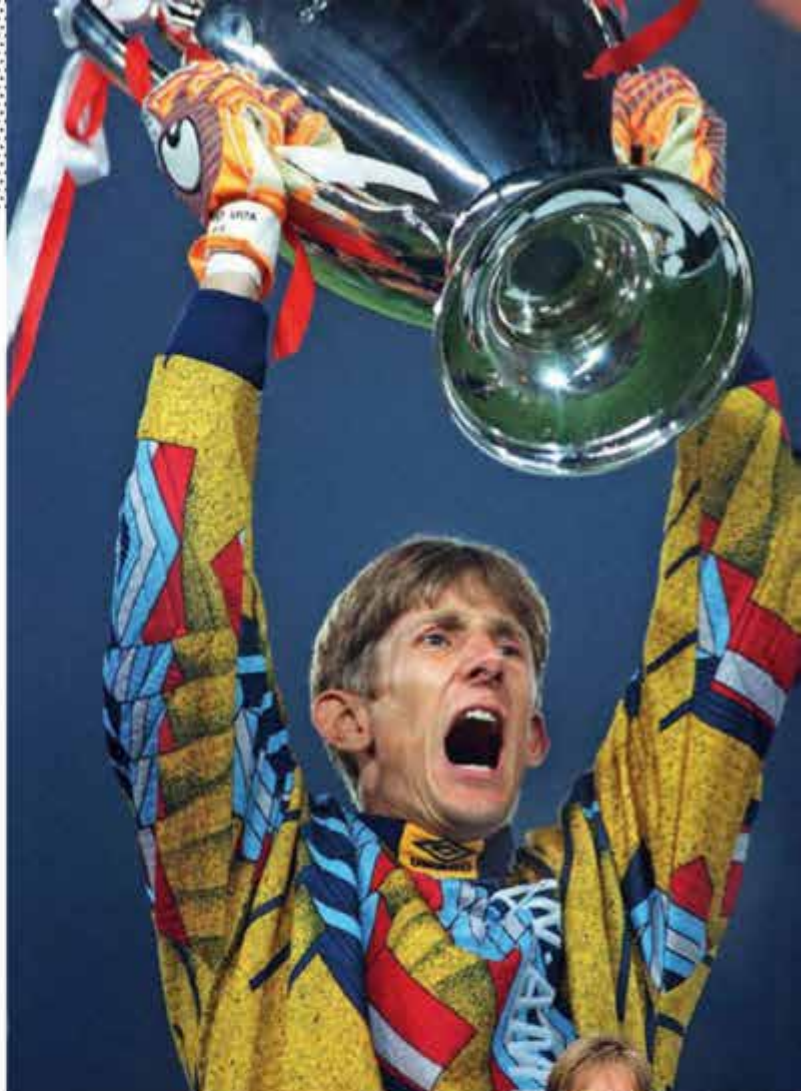
*Jimmy Wainwright, Cardiff*

It didn't happen in particularly pleasant circumstances, although I must admit I didn't reach the level at Juventus that I had reached before in Holland. In that summer [2001] I had actually requested a meeting to hear about their ideas for the forthcoming season. They said they were looking to bring in one or two new players, but assured me I didn't have to worry. Then, probably a week later, they brought in Buffon for about £30 million. Obviously that deal must have been in the pipeline for some time, though they decided not to tell me anything about it when I went for that meeting. So, yeah, it took me by surprise and I had to start looking at my options to find a new club.

**Why did you decide to sign for Fulham from Juventus? We were not exactly the biggest club around at the time!**

*'Raf M', via Twitter*

Around that time, there was quite a lot of movement amongst keepers in Italy, with Buffon signing for Juve, Francesco Toldo going to Inter Milan and Sebastien Frey moving to Parma. It was a kind of jostle between goalies at the top clubs, but I was sort of left out. I then spoke to Ajax, to Liverpool and to Dortmund. The latter two wanted to wait until the end of the summer transfer window. I did not want to be hanging on for that long. Fulham had some big ambitions – they had just won the First Division title to go into the Premier League and were signing a lot of new players. I just wanted to play some football. I consulted Louis van Gaal, who was the Netherlands' national coach at the time, and he was really positive about the move. I saw it as maybe taking one small step back in order to then try to make several steps forward further down the line.



**Top to bottom** Edwin won the Champions League in '95 with Ajax; smiling for the cameras with Fulham gaffer Jean Tigana after his surprise move to west London in 2001; VDS had been forced out of Juve to make way for Gigi Buffon



**What was Mohamed Al-Fayed like as a person during your time at Fulham? Did he do anything particularly odd?**

*Matt Bagnall, via Twitter*

He was an eccentric man – he definitely did a few unusual things! Before games, he would turn up pitchside and walk on the pitch waving a scarf. Usually he'd make sure he came round to say hello to me while I was doing my warm-up. He would

often talk to players – on matchdays he would come inside the dressing room to see us, and sometimes he even turned up at training in his helicopter. On more than one occasion, after a good run of results, he would treat all of the players to a big hamper from his Harrods store.

**Were you surprised that Jean Tigana got sacked as Fulham boss in 2003? It seemed a little harsh given he'd got them up to the Premier League in '01 and kept them up the following year.**

*Trevor Bailey, via Facebook*

It was a pity, particularly for me, as he was the manager who had brought me





"THE IDEA HAD ALWAYS BEEN FOR ME TO REPLACE SCHMEICHEL - FERGIE WAS KEEN BUT THE CHAIRMAN HAD ALREADY DONE A DEAL TO SIGN BOSNICH ON A FREE"



**Top to bottom** Van der Sar takes the high road to deny Didier Drogba; and the low one as Andy Johnson goes close; Mohamed Al-Fayed liked a hands-on approach during his reign at Fulham

to the club. Jean had a good knowledge of football and you could tell he played at a high level. Sometimes he'd join in training and you could see his quality.

**Did you ever wish you'd gone straight from Juventus to Manchester United in 2001, rather than having to spend four seasons at Fulham in between?**

*Darren Chin, Brunei*

I really enjoyed my time in London, but I hadn't anticipated that I'd be playing for Fulham for four years. I was thinking it would probably be about one or two years, then I would take the next step. Towards the end of my Fulham career, I even signed a little contract extension so the club could get a transfer fee for me. I was told I wouldn't be playing if I did not agree to extend my contract!

I found out that United were going to sign me when I discovered a voicemail from Alex Ferguson. That was a special day. That was the moment I thought: 'This is why I came over to London - to eventually make this next step forward.' Ferguson told me he needed someone who could lead and give guidance to the defence. He said he knew I wouldn't get flustered if the side was under pressure.

**What would you look for when doing your homework on the opposition's penalty-takers? And what was going through your mind as Nicolas Anelka stepped up to take his in the 2008 Champions League Final shootout?**

*'PenaltyKickStat', via Twitter*

I remember studying a lot of Chelsea's penalties on DVD before the match. So, for example, I think I probably analysed about 40 that Frank Lampard had taken in the past. I had made plenty of notes and noticed that Nicolas Anelka would almost always take his penalties to the goalkeeper's right. Later on, I heard that Chelsea had also done their homework on me and learned that I usually dived to my right. So I think their players were told to shoot to my left, which most of them did. I'd anticipated Anelka would choose to shoot the other side, though, and thankfully that is what happened.

After I had pushed away his penalty, I felt like I was separated from the world for a couple of seconds. I don't think I'll ever experience a more ecstatic moment than when I realised we'd just won the Champions League final and noticed all of my team-mates running towards me. It was the highlight of my whole career. ▶



**How often do you think back to John Terry's slip and have a little laugh?**

*Peter Johnston, via Facebook*

No, I don't laugh about it, as I realise it was a narrow escape. We were lucky in that moment. I have to admit that the pitch was bad – I slipped a few times.

**You've been credited with ending the long-running feud between Ruud van Nistelrooy and Marco van Basten, so that Van Nistelrooy could be part of the Euro 2008 squad. What was it you said to them to smooth things over?**

*Thijs van Damme, via Facebook*

I wouldn't say that I was the one who managed to bring them together again. I just expressed my own opinion, as the captain of the team, about what I felt would be good for the squad. I pointed to the value of Van Nistelrooy – that he could be important to the team during the tournament. I think they are quite stubborn characters, really. I generally empathise quite well between different people and groups, so I expressed my thoughts. But it wasn't like I organised a meeting or anything and demanded they put their differences behind them.

**Did you ever get bored during the run of 14 straight clean sheets in 2008-09, with Gary Neville, Nemanja Vidic, Rio Ferdinand and Patrice Evra proving an impregnable barrier in front of you?**

*Griffin Pyle, via Twitter*

No, absolutely not! [Laughs] But at the time, I said that the run wouldn't count for anything if we were not champions come the end of the season. Everything was geared towards that goal. Perhaps the media and people around me were getting a bit more concerned about the run of clean sheets than I was myself.

**How annoyed were you when the long run without conceding was ended by an error at Newcastle, allowing Peter Lovenkrands to score on the rebound? I bet you wish it had been a screamer.**

*Lewis Meagor, via Facebook*

Yeah, I would rather the sequence had been broken by a rocket, right in the top corner. Sure, I could have set the record a little bit higher. But on the other hand, I can also remember the moment when a West Brom player hit the post just 10 minutes before I was about to break the record, so they evened themselves out.



**"I KNEW THAT ANELKA OFTEN WENT TO THE KEEPER'S RIGHT. I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER HAVE A MORE ECSTATIC MOMENT"**



**It's often said that Wayne Rooney and Cristiano Ronaldo were at very similar level as youngsters, but went on to hit different heights because Ronaldo was more dedicated to improving himself as a player. Would you say that's fair?**

*Sam Hirst, Leicester*

They both worked incredibly hard on the pitch, but Cristiano took it up a level. Off the field, Ronaldo was also focusing on everything extensively, such as resting up properly and strengthening his body.

After training sessions he would often work on his free-kicks and then come to me and say: "Edwin, can you go in goal?" I'd say I was old so he would be better off using one of the youth-team keepers, but he would insist I went in goal as he wanted to score past me. I would tease him a lot and say things like: "You won't score against me, Ronnie, you know it."

Ask the reserve goalie, that's better for your confidence." He'd get agitated and reply: "No, no. You've got to go in goal!" Cristiano is a really good guy, however, and the common perception of him is not a true reflection of his personality.

**Is the United team you played in that lifted three successive Premier League titles and also got to three Champions League finals in four years underrated? They don't get talked about as one of the best but few have won as much...**

*Brian Woodford, via Facebook*

Well, if we wanted to be a really great team, then we should have won two of those three Champions League finals we played in that period. For example, if we had won in 2009, we would have been Europe's best for two seasons and also the first team ever to win consecutive

Champions League titles. So if we'd won the final against Barcelona in Rome, we would have been a great team. But of course, if you look at the players we had back then, we were certainly very good.

**What did you make of all the pressure David de Gea was under when he first arrived at United? Is the English media a little harsh on foreign goalkeepers?**

*Aaron Cassidy, Coventry*

No, I didn't find the criticism too harsh at the time. He didn't play very well and made some errors, which is maybe to be expected if you go to such a huge club like United at such a young age. It's a new country where the people speak a different language and the style of football is very different. But since then he has worked very hard and been able to turn things round. He has developed into a really good goalkeeper now.

**What's happened to the Dutch side, Edwin? The Euros last year weren't the same without the Oranje fans...**

*Ryan Byrne, Liverpool*

I think every now and then you face a setback in your qualifying record, like in 2002 when we missed out on the World Cup. At the moment I feel we are lacking top players at a peak age – those 25, 26 and 27-year-olds who can carry the team. When you lose twice to Iceland, you do not deserve to be a part of a European Championship.

**Twice during your time at United, you had to depart the field and we ended up with an outfield player in goal. Rio Ferdinand went in goal vs Portsmouth and John O'Shea against Tottenham. What advice did you give them both?**

*Hannah Stewart, via Twitter*

In those situations I did not really have time to pass on much advice! Against Portsmouth, I sustained a groin injury and my replacement Tomasz Kuszczak

got a red card later on in the match, so by the time Ferdinand was going in goal I was already sat high up in the stands. In the match against Spurs I broke my nose after a collision with Robbie Keane and went down the tunnel to get some treatment. A few minutes later I heard a massive roar, and it turned out O'Shea had actually made a pretty good save!

**How much can you actually hear from the supporters behind the goal during a match? What's the weirdest heckle that you've ever received from a fan?**

*Michael Baker, London*

The West Ham fans were not that nice. Let's just say they all seemed to have quite a, er, limited vocabulary... but the kind of abuse you would receive at an away ground usually depended on whether your side were winning or losing the game. When you were in front, you did not need to rush the goal-kicks and the fans would all get angry. When you were behind, and you had to rush to collect a ball from behind the goal, then everybody would be jeering in the stands. But on the whole, the atmosphere with English fans was great and I felt at home when I was living in England.

**I heard that you did the New York Marathon in 2012 – why did you do it and how long did it take to run?**

*Nathaniel Bullock, Leeds*

A few years before, a friend of mine had told me he was going to be running that marathon. The idea really appealed to me so I said to him: "Why don't you just wait for a little while and I will join you when I retire from football." But it then took a few more years as I extended my United deal a couple of times. [Laughs] In the end, I had about two and a half months to prepare for it. It was a huge burden on my body and it needed quite some time to recover, but eventually my time was four hours and 19 minutes. ●



**Above left** Van der Sar led United to three Champions League final appearances in four years **Left** He made one outing for hometown team VV Noordwijk at the end of his career **Bottom** "Quit posing, Ronnie, it's my turn with the trophy"



## HIGHS & LOWS

### HIGH: 1995

Wins first Champions League title at the age of just 24, as Ajax see off Milan 1-0 in the Vienna final

### LOW: 2001

Is forced to leave Juventus after being displaced by 23-year-old Parma keeper Gianluigi Buffon

### HIGH: 2002

Lifts Intertoto Cup with Fulham after overcoming Bologna – the Cottagers' first European trophy

### LOW: 2004

Denied his best opportunity to win an international honour as the Dutch lose 2-1 to Portugal in the semi-finals of Euro 2004

### HIGH: 2007

Wins first of four Premier League titles with Manchester United, in an era that features Champions League glory in Moscow in 2008

### LOW: 2009

Loses the first of two Champions League finals to Barcelona in the space of three years, with Rome loss followed by Wembley woe

### HIGH: 2016

Comes out of retirement to play one match for boyhood side VV Noordwijk and saves a penalty





**BATTLE AXE** Getafe released Cata Diaz after his wife called the coach a 'fake coward' on Instagram. But at least a fake coward is better than a real coward, right?

# AROUND THE WORLD IN 12 STORIES

Neymar tricks a canary, an Argentinian team pretend to be gladiators and a journo infuriates Romania's boss with a fishing rod: it's been a jape a minute this month

## 1 BANKS WOULD HAVE SAVED IT Mexico Guadalajara

The Estadio Jalisco played host to one of the greatest saves in football history – Gordon Banks' denial of Pele during the 1970 World Cup – and now it's also seen one of the oddest postponements.

Ravel Morrison was all set for his Atlas debut against Tigres UANL, only for the game to get called off as a big TV screen newly installed above the centre circle was hanging dangerously low.

The Tigres goalkeeper Nahuel Guzman posed for pictures pretending to hold up the screen, though he couldn't save the day: it needed Banks to turn up and improbably tip it over the stadium roof.

## 2 LION, HART England Ashford

If Paul Gascoigne's taught us anything, it's that nothing can possibly go wrong when an England international opts to stick his fingers near a lion enclosure.

Thankfully, Joe Hart was able to feed the lions at the Big Cat Sanctuary in Kent without major incident, although it was a lot less funny. If you still haven't seen that famous Gazza clip, YouTube it now.

## 3 "WHICH ONE OF YOU LOT IS RUSSELL CROWE?" Argentina Junin

They're back, and they're weirder than ever. The Argentinian side Sacachispas dressed up as superheroes for a team photo ahead of a shock cup win earlier in the year, and with four months until the next round, they had plenty of time to prepare for their last 16 showdown at Sarmiento. But never mind the actual match, what were they going to wear?

Gladiator garb, obviously! The team emerged onto the field complete with helmets, shields and spears. God knows how they got those through security...

## 4 CHEERS, LADS! Germany Munich

It's not just Sacachispas who have been posing for weird photos – even Bayern Munich have got involved.

As part of an annual sponsorship deal the full squad donned lederhosen and posed with beer in hand, Franck Ribery excepted due to religious reasons. Sadly no spears for Die Roten's squad, though. Remember kids, beer and ancient Roman weaponry just do not mix.

## 5 DON'T GIVE UP THE DAY JOB, ROM Belgium Brussels

When Belgium started to create a new mascot, they had a brainwave: why not let our star striker design it?

Romelu Lukaku was soon handed an easel and pen and told to do his worst. Unfortunately, Rom took that invitation very literally, coming up with one of the worst drawings anybody has ever seen. The federation have now asked the fans to supply some ideas instead: Rom's bid to be the next Van Gogh could be over.

## 6 DAUM TAKES THE BAIT Romania Bucharest

You know when you are trying to stage a press conference, but a bloke keeps waving a bloody fishing rod around in front of your face?

Christoph Daum certainly does. Having claimed a newspaper was 'only good for wrapping fish', said newspaper hit back by sending a scribe along to the Romania coach's next press conference with rod in hand. The German didn't react well, and his turbulent spell as boss came to an end days later.

He's unlikely to spend his new-found spare time going on any fishing trips...

## 7 CANARY TRAP Brazil Manaus

Sometimes old ones are the best, right? Once Brazilian duo Neymar and Philippe Coutinho had finished an open training session with the Selecao, they teamed up to play a classic prank on Canarinho. Neymar knelt down behind the mascot, then Coutinho pushed him backwards, knocking the bird over in comedic style.

Kids, eh? The top clubs won't want to pay the big bucks for them if they don't start taking things a bit more seriously.

## 8 LEAVE THEM ALONE, JULIA! Italy Verona

Just what is it with Julia Roberts being pictured with football stars these days? First she was at Old Trafford chatting to Michael Carrick, and then she told Sergio Ramos "you played amazing" after he'd been sent off in El Clasico.

This time, Roberts posed with Robert Lewandowski and wife at the intriguing 'Calzedonia Leg Show'. We look forward to her meeting up with Stoke's attacker Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting any day now.

## 9 "IT'S A LOT WARMER THAN THIS IN MADRID..." Wales Vale of Glamorgan

When Gareth Bale said that he needed some crying therapy after recent woes at Real Madrid, the Welsh FA must have misheard. Instead, they instructed him to strip to his pants before sticking him inside a room that quickly plummeted to minus 160 degrees.

All right, they didn't mishear: this was the Welsh squad's cryotherapy recovery after their victory at home to Austria. It helped them to beat Moldova days later and it also perfectly acclimatised them for the autumn internationals in Cardiff.

## 10 GET THE BANNER, MO'S HERE Uganda Kampala

So you want Wenger out of Arsenal, but you live 4,000 away miles from London. How do you make your voice heard? It's obvious: you wait for Gunners midfielder Mohamed Elneny to rock up in Uganda and then ask him to pass on a message.

"Elneny please tell Wenger to resign," one chap penned on his placard when Egypt arrived for a World Cup qualifier. Elneny no doubt agreed to the request.

"So how was your break, Mo?"

"Good, gaffer, but I have to inform you that a bloke in Uganda wants you out." "Oh he does, does he? Sigh."

## 11 "NO, YOU CAN'T HAVE YOUR BALL BACK!" France Juillan

There's only so many footballs that can land in a Frenchwoman's garden before she eventually snaps.

That's what happened at the Pyrenees club Juillan III, where one local resident stormed out onto the pitch with a chair during the game with Tarbes, sat down and refused to budge. The match was abandoned – consider it a point made.

## 12 WHAT ARE THE CHANCES? Qatar Doha

There was a surprise winner of the Doha Bank Lottery: former Barcelona ace Xavi.

He may reportedly be on £7 million per year at Al Sadd, but Xavi bagged himself an extra million Riyal (£200,000) as well as one of those huge cheques. Decent publicity for the lottery, too, as it goes...

It gives clubs battling FFP an idea: can our players win the lottery every week?

# SIX OF THE BEST FIXTURES

**Syria vs Australia** October 5  
Play-off first leg in Malaysia – winners of the tie face CONCACAF opposition for a World Cup spot

**Argentina vs Peru** October 5  
Peru are on course for Russia; Argentina only for a play-off berth – unless Messi & Co. seal victory

**Wales vs Rep of Ireland** October 9  
A British Isles head-to-head in Cardiff – in what could be a crucial final Group D clash



# 78 JET-PROPELLED

A referee at a reserve game in China had a flight to catch post-match, so he played only 78 minutes – 40 in the first half and 38 in the second – before legging it



**Liverpool vs Man United** October 14  
Jurgen Klopp is yet to secure a league win over the Reds' rivals: will this be the German's day?

**Derby vs Nott'm Forest** October 15  
Old pals reunite in the biannual East Midlands friendship match – not really, this will be feisty

**Real Madrid vs Tottenham** October 17  
Spurs lost 4-0 on their last visit: this time, at least Peter Crouch can't get sent off after 15 minutes





FourFourTwo  
FILMS

PRESENTS

# GOALKEEPER

THE LONELIEST JOB IN FOOTBALL

You stand on your own, taking abuse from opposing fans, trying to prevent the very thing people come to games for – goals. You'd have to be mad to be one, right? FFT meets the unique souls who don the gloves to find out what makes them tick



OUT ON OCTOBER 20 | [YOUTUBE.COM/FOURFOURTWO](https://www.youtube.com/fourfourtwo)





**ILLUSION** An ad showed Leo Messi playing the Champions League tune but it was really pianist Tomas Fosc: "I played it so many times, I don't ever want to listen to it again"

UPFRONT



# ARSENAL ROCKED AGAIN

No, not another defeat for Wenger's men – this time their badge has been given the Pink Floyd treatment

**A**n increasing tally of teams are missing a rock at the heart of the defence these days – so an Argentinian artist has helped out by giving them some rock at the heart of their club badges instead.

Juan Lopez Moses has been able to mix football crests with rock logos in a series of artworks that unite his two great passions.

"I've always been a massive fan of football and rock," he tells *FFT*. "This idea came from something small. As a fan of Black Sabbath, for a while I'd been toying with finding some way to merge the badge of Aston Villa, who Ozzy Osbourne and Geezer Butler both support, with the band's flying devil mascot, Henry.

"I found a picture of Ozzy Osbourne online where he was wearing a Villa shirt, and imagined how it might look if I swapped the Villa lion with Henry. The end product was really good and so I decided to take the project on to another level."

Indeed, Juan has designed a myriad different rock-inspired logos, boosting West Ham's firepower by taking away the hammers and using the guns from Iron Maiden's *A Matter Of Life A Death* album, as well as combining Chelsea with Gorillaz in honour of Blues fanatic Damon Albarn.

Manchester United's devil has been substituted for Stone Roses artwork and even Shrewsbury Town appear – as the film *This Is Spinal Tap* featured a band member wearing a Shrews top.

"I always try to use artists who have an interest in football already," Juan explains. "British club crests were the best option when it came to getting inspiration. Most of them will contain certain elements: a rose, a bird, a lion, a devil, a crown, and so on. The idea was to replace these with something that characterised each band. Most of the best rock artists come from the British Isles.

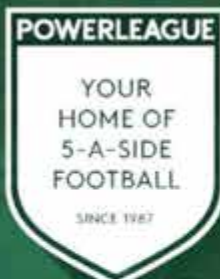
"The majority of the badges use the band's own logos while the other ones feature a distinctive element from the artist's work. For Pink Floyd I chose the prism from the *Dark Side Of The Moon* cover, which I used to replace Arsenal's famous cannon. For Daft Punk, I didn't use a French team but their federation logo, because that had some metallic qualities that matched with the band's helmets. That way, I could use a helmet to replace the rooster and it didn't look out of place."

Now the French national team will be hoping to live up to their new crest by winning the World Cup in Russia. Their fortunes surely rely on Kylian Mbappe: they'll need the young pup all right to get lucky...





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## ASK A SILLY QUESTION

## JASON 'RIVERDANCE' McATEER

The ex-Liverpool midfielder has got the moves, but he draws the line at dressing up like a Siamese cat

Interview Nick Moore Illustration Bill McConkey

**Hi Jason. Bolton apparently bought you from Marine for a nominal fee "plus a large bag of footballs". So how many balls were in that bag?**

Hi mate. I've no idea, but I know that the nominal fee of £500 managed to cover the price of a new roof for the club, after the old one had got blown off by a storm in Crosby. I wasn't just a big bag of balls, I was a roof as well. Although they didn't call it the 'Jason McAteer Roof', which is a great shame.

**How many footballs have you got?**

I've got six in the garden and a few spongy ones in the house, which are my son's. He's lucky. They have got it too easy these days. I didn't get balls as a kid - I had to roll up some socks and sellotape them. I used to smash so many ornaments it was ridiculous. I'd get a good hiding every Saturday.

**What was the most valuable thing you decimated around the house?**

We had a family heirloom, which was a statue of a woman, and I remember glancing the ball off that once. It was a heart-stopping moment as it rocked left and right in slow motion. I had to run and catch it as it fell off a shelf. It was like Tom Cruise catching that egg in *Risky Business* - a terrible moment.

**You share a birthday with Sir Paul McCartney and Delia Smith. Would you rather go on a cookery course in Italy with Delia or tour with Macca?**

You'd have to go on tour with Macca, wouldn't you? I am a bit disappointed in Paul to be honest, as he's never sent me a birthday card. But touring would be legendary. You wouldn't remember much, though. Maybe I could play the recorder. I can do the *Star Wars* theme.

**How's your cooking?**

You might not believe me, but last night I made a corned beef hash with sweet potato. I caramelised all the onions in butter, that's the secret. Unfortunately,



I can't do much else. We are into the realms of toast after that. Cheese on toast, beans on toast... all the classics.

**Who is the most Irish not-actually-Irish Ireland international between your good self and John Aldridge?**

My grandad was from Northern Ireland and John's was from the Republic, so he'd claim he was. John can also drink a hell of a lot more Guinness than me - he has got hollow legs. If you go and have a drink with him, you have to 'lose' a pint occasionally. Every Ireland game was like a stag do. I'd say that I can do a better Riverdance than Aldo, though.

**Your friend Dietmar Hamann wrote a book called *The Didi Man*. Was he familiar with the work of Ken Dodd?**

Of course! I have been to see Doddy, you know. He goes on for about three hours. It's very good but you can't take that much. I got up and walked out in the end. I just didn't have the stamina.

**Is Doddy right about happiness being the greatest gift that we all possess?**

He is. There's not a lot of it around at the minute, is there? We need to show everybody in the world a bit more love. In all seriousness, though, we should try to sing off the same hymn sheet.

**Amen. Now, let's go hypothetical - would you spend three days a week for a year inside a postbox in return for a superpower of your choice?**

One hundred per cent I would. I'd go for flying as my power so I could whizz around all the time. Disneyland would be the first stop on the list, no doubt!

**Excellent. Would you wear Siamese cat facepaint and pretend to be a cat for a month in return for a big yacht?**

Yes. Yachts are expensive, aren't they? Actually, no. No, I wouldn't be a cat.

**And finally, would you go on a blind date with the woman who does the speaking clock voice on the phone?**

Nah, I wouldn't bother mate. She has got a nice voice but that's a bit risky.

**Fair enough. Cheers for chatting!**

Ta pal.

McAteer is an ambassador for Liverpool FC, as part of the partnership with New Balance. Visit [www.newbalance.co.uk](http://www.newbalance.co.uk)

"FLYING WOULD BE MY POWER SO I COULD WHIZZ AROUND - FIRST STOP DISNEYLAND!"





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**PRESENT DAY HERO** Christmas really has come early for Fulham: the brilliantly named Spanish forward Nicolas Santos Clase has been starring for the club's under-18s

**UPFRONT**



**ALEX OXLADE-CHAMBERLAIN**  
**MONTH IN MUSIC**

**The Ox**  
The Who

**Wasted Years**  
Iron Maiden

**Wings**  
Little Mix

**Stuck Out Here**  
Screaming Weasel

**Four Kicks**  
Kings Of Leon

**Alex Go!**  
Horrorshow

**(I Don't Want To Go To) Chelsea**  
Elvis Costello

**Man In The Middle**  
Bee Gees

**Mersey Beat**  
Reckless Kelly

**Careful What You Wish For**  
Eminem

**Take Five**  
The Dave  
Brubeck Quartet

**Substitute**  
The Who

## PLAYER OF THE MONTH(S)

**Whenever Atletico Nacional Under-18 coach Hernan Dario Herrera summons one of his players, he doesn't call out the name, he picks a random month of the year instead.**

And that's because the Colombian club's highly-rated teenage star is Efmamjjasond Gonzalez. Nope, he's not named after an Icelandic volcano. It's actually because his first name features the opening letter of each month of the year in Spanish. We all know how it goes, right? Enero, Febrero, Marzo, Abril, Mayo, Junio, Julio, Agosto, Septiembre, Octubre, Noviembre, Diciembre.

"Dad wanted to call me 'Efmamjjasond Jhonathan', but my mum said I wouldn't ever be able to write such a long name, so they just left it at Efmamjjasond," says Jason, as he's known to his friends – although he has also been dubbed 'Calendario'. "When the coach wants to substitute me, he'll just shout out March, April or any month that comes into his head on the bench. I'm already pretty used to it by now!"



**M**onaco's performances on the field may have grabbed the headlines in recent times, but their mascot is determined not to be overshadowed.

After mysteriously disappearing for a period, Bouba the Elephant made his glorious return to the club last year and swiftly set about trying to qualify for the Rio Olympics, obviously. Sadly Bouba's hopes were dashed: the 100m time he posted on the track at Monaco's Stade Louis II was not about to trouble Usain Bolt. He did soar to 3m in the pole vault, though – not too shabby for an elephant, and briefly earning him the

nickname 'Sergey Bouba'. Just another 3.17m to go, and the world record is his.

Bouba is named after a real elephant that used to reside at the zoo next to the club's former stadium: supposedly the animal could occasionally be heard over the 'noise' of the crowd at games.

Mascot Bouba undertook an even more daring stunt this January: attempting a tightrope walk between two massive rocks overlooking the stadium, at an altitude of 500m. Suspiciously, however, the pachyderm suddenly appeared to have some human feet. In fact, hold on a minute, Monaco had a mascot that disappeared for a while, then returned in 2016? It's Radamel Falcao in that suit, isn't it?



## KALAMAZOO OUTRAGE

As if their name wasn't cool enough, the US fourth-tier side came up with a badge that depicted an alligator preparing to eat a ball. Maybe the logo left opponents too terrified to play them? The Michigan outfit folded in 2010, only three years after they'd formed.





# GAMES THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

## RICARDO CARVALHO



### Porto 6 Braga 0

1996 Youth team match

"My career could have taken a really different path without this game. The president was watching and I scored a hat-trick. Not bad for a defender, eh? I was 17 and people from a second-tier side were there wanting to sign me on loan, but the president said that I was going nowhere, or out on loan to a first division outfit. Who knows what may have happened if I hadn't played well."

### Spain 0 Portugal 1

June 20, 2004 European Championship

"This will always be one of my favourite football memories. It was my first ever Euros, playing on home soil, and was an unforgettable feeling. I also became an indisputable starter after that. We had to beat Spain to qualify from the group and did the job against our neighbours. The country had waited a long time for that."

### Chelsea 1 Tottenham 0

April 7, 2007 Premier League

"I was lucky enough to play well in the big matches during my time in England. The games against Manchester United might be the ones I played the best in, but I'm picking out this match against Spurs even though we couldn't become champions that season. We closed the gap to United by beating our rivals 1-0 and I scored the winner. Happy days."

### Real Madrid 1 Osasuna 0

September 11, 2010 La Liga

"We have all got childhood dreams and playing for Real Madrid was one of mine – unfortunately it came true a little late in my career! [Laughs] I went there at 32 and was not in my best form – that was at Chelsea – but my home debut at the Bernabeu was one of the most special moments during my career. I managed to score against Osasuna and everything started off very well for me in Madrid."

"WE HAD TO BEAT SPAIN TO QUALIFY AND WE DID OUR JOB. THE COUNTRY HAD WAITED A LONG TIME FOR A MOMENT LIKE THAT"





**QUOTE OF THE MONTH** Kylian Mbappe's bid to look like Zidane as a kid: "I asked the hairdresser to cut a round bit out of my hair, as I didn't know what baldness was"



## "GET YOUR BRAS OUT FOR THE LASSES!"

When fans turned up to watch Stevenage take on Lincoln in League Two, there was a very obvious question: why is that bloke in the away end wearing a bra?







That bloke was one Simon Chanter, who is popularly known as Sid and decided to make a show of himself in a bid to show up the hosts' stewards, on behalf of Lincoln's rivals.

Around 10 female Grimsby supporters had complained of oddly being forced to show their bras upon entry to the Lamex Stadium a couple of weeks previous, so Chanter opted to go for a rather revealing display of solidarity for the Mariners fans.

"I may have looked a bit stupid but I was trying to make a very serious point to the Stevenage stewards," he tells *FFT*. "The bra set me back a fiver. I'd tried a 38-inch bra on, but it didn't fit. In the end I got a mate to push my back into it and then quickly fasten it up. After a while it was like I had nothing on. We won the game 2-1, too, so I might have to do it again!"

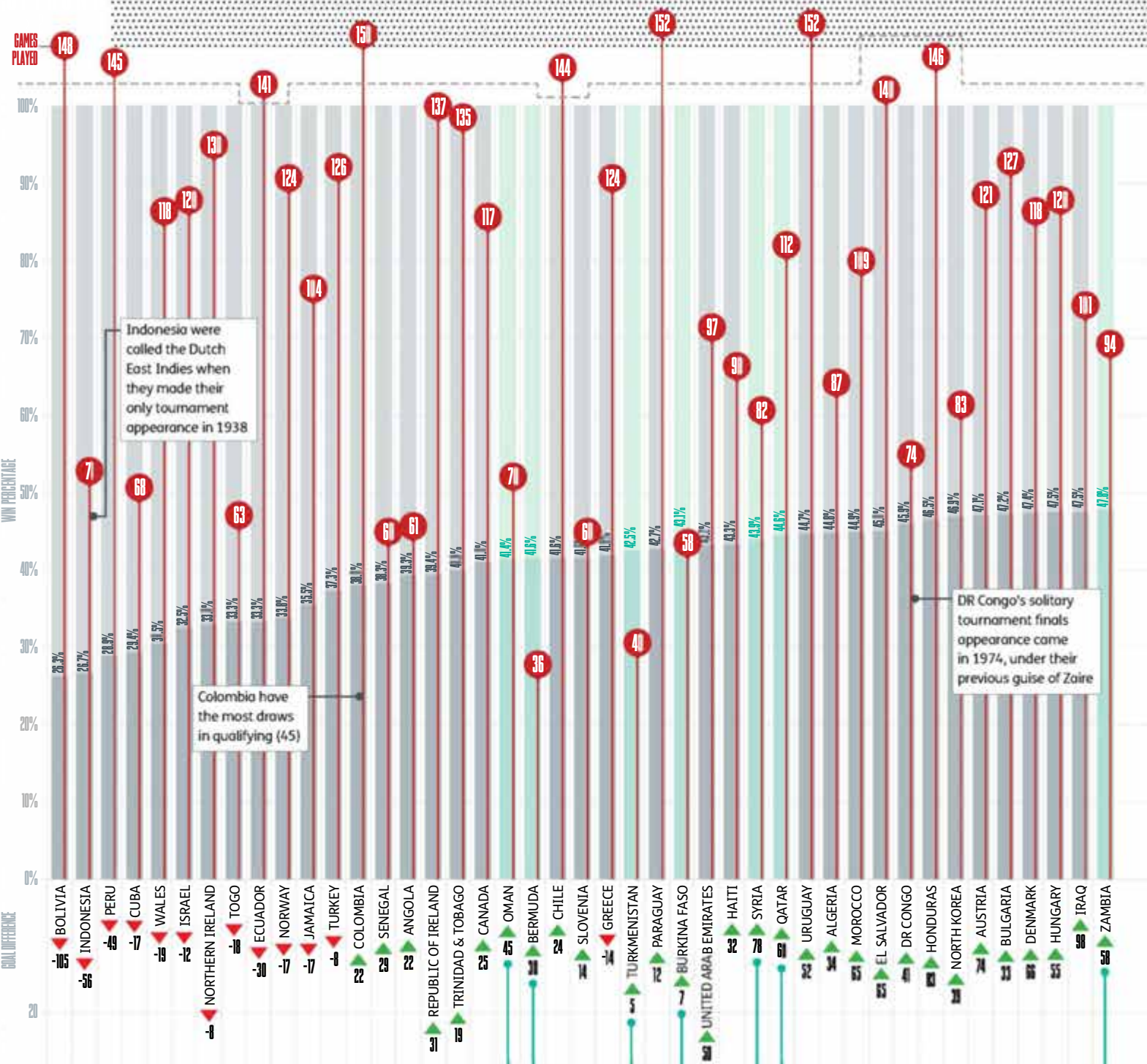
## THE FOOTBALL GRID

It's sink or swim for TV presenters: some of them are eventually consumed by dark forces, others smash it

	JEFF STELLING	DES LYNAM	ADRIAN CHILES	GARY LINEKER	RICHARD KEYS
Name					
Look	World's smallest man puts on waistcoat and Hartlepool shirt	The greatest moustache of all time	Dragged backwards through a hedge 	Surprisingly healthy for a man who survives on crisps alone	Extraordinarily pleased with himself
Known as...	Soccer Saturday anchorman, yelling his way out of a glass case of emotion	The don of football presenters	That bloke who was on ITV for a bit, annoyed everyone and then wasn't on ITV any more	The reigning king of <i>Match of the Day</i> . He used to play, too	The man who invented football in 1992
Presenting style	Permanently outwitting Paul Merson and Chris Kamara: not too hard, to be fair	Absolute charm onslaught	"Er, isn't this great? Mum, er, I'm on the telly!"	Tell enough weak jokes and someone will laugh	Extraordinarily pleased with himself
Weirdest moment	Angrily demanding resignation of Hartlepool boss Dave Jones. Keep it light...	Gangsta rapping during an appearance on <i>Room 101</i> 	Asking Roy Keane: "When does heavy rain become an actual downpour?"	Presenting in his underwear. Turns out the studio's colder than you think	Asking Jamie Redknapp: "Would you smash it?" 
Best quote	"Mido has just been sent off and I can confirm he walks like an Egyptian"	"More football later, but first let's see the goals from the Scottish Cup final"	"Lampard's not the first player to run to the crowd with lips over his mouth" 	"Rafa, Shearer will wear his underwear if Newcastle win the title. Can you pull it off?"	"It was just banter"
Who'd play him in a film?	They'll hail from the North East – is Jimmy Nail busy? It's 2017, of course he isn't 	Sean Connery: Sean would have to work on being a bit more debonair though 	Rowan Atkinson in Mr Bean style: being virtually mute might bring real benefits	Dumbo: a return favour after odd reports that J-Lo was eager for him to pose as the elephant in a Disney photocall	Anyone who'd much prefer filming in Qatar than England



# UPFRONT



## FRANCE? THEY'RE NO CHINA

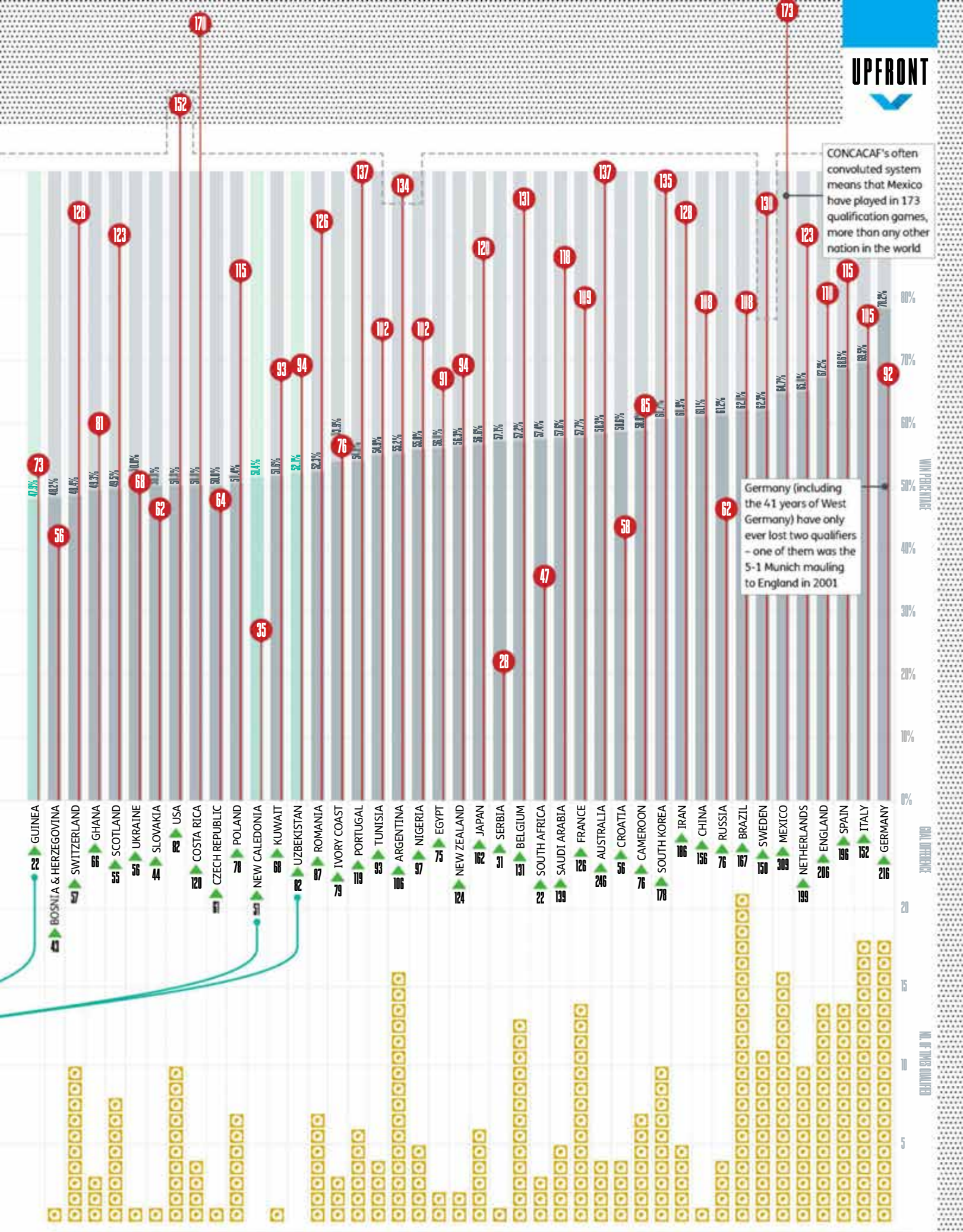
The globe's most populous nation has only reached one World Cup finals, though their all-time win percentage in qualifying is better than both Argentina and Les Bleus. *Mon dieu!*

These are the top 10 countries never to have qualified



CONCACAF's often convoluted system means that Mexico have played in 173 qualification games, more than any other nation in the world

Germany (including the 41 years of West Germany) have only ever lost two qualifiers – one of them was the 5-1 Munich mauling to England in 2001







**GET OFF THE PITCH, MATE** A Turkish Cup match was held up when a security guard obliviously wandered across the field while taking a phone call, scampering off as soon as he realised

## REQUIRED READING



**Edge**  
Ben Lyttleton  
Harper Collins, £14.99

The beautiful game is still overly reliant on conventional wisdom and half-baked truths but, as Lyttleton says in this excellent book, creative thinking is bearing fruit at clubs who are prepared to be more innovative. "I'm not looking for change, I'm looking for an edge," reveals the former Borussia Dortmund manager, Thomas Tuchel.

The first leader in sport to address the Rulebreaker Society (a group of visionary business trailblazers), Tuchel is a believer in the speedy alteration of tactical formations in matches, and that eye contact between players is essential to team cohesion.

Lyttleton also looks at the Basque values of Athletic Bilbao, and *Edge* helps the reader to assess the game in a left-field way with findings about Visual Exploratory Frequency – the number of times players look up before getting the ball.

It's a cerebral study, showing cutting edge ideas are increasingly crucial to success in 21st century football.

# ONE QUESTION QUIZ WHOSE FACIAL HAIR?

Can you identify the 20 famous football figures below from their face fuzz alone?



**Answers** 1) Rudi Völler; 2) Sam Allardyce; 3) Riyad Mahrez; 4) Artur Jorge; 5) Diego Simeone; 6) Alexi Lalas; 7) Luiz Felipe Scolari; 8) Diego Costa; 9) Raheem Sterling; 10) Lionel Messi; 11) Mark Lawrenson; 12) Adam Clayton; 13) Neville Southall; 14) Chris Kamara; 15) Sean Dyche; 16) Roy Keane; 17) Andre Villas-Boas; 18) Ian Rush; 19) Joe Ledley; 20) Vicente del Bosque





**"LOOK,  
THAT'S ME!"**

It's not every month a Japanese raccoon dog gets in contact with *FourFourTwo* to thank us for an article on him, but this has been one of those months.

Tokyo Dorompa had been picked as *FFT*'s mascot of the month in September's issue, and was swiftly made aware of his sudden worldwide fame. "He was super delighted to see the feature in the magazine," says supporter Reiko Sakai, who gave Dorompa an issue.

So super delighted, in fact, that he went round signing several copies, as a number of supporters turned up brandishing them ahead of FC Tokyo's J-League encounter at home to Kawasaki Frontale last month. Dorompa even went as far as to scribble a thank you message to *FFT* and then hold it up for the cameras.

That complete, he went back to doing his usual mad stuff, like staging a press conference to reveal details of a birthday party that has been planned in his honour. We'll be honest, we have seen some far better pressers in our time, what with him being a mute mascot. Any questions? Nah, thought not.

# TALENTSPOTTER JADON SANCHO



**THEY SAID:** "For those who don't know Jadon Sancho, you need to know him – he's that good," said former Newcastle, Manchester City and Liverpool striker Craig Bellamy.

**COMPARED TO:** Neymar: he usually operates from the left wing and uses his dribbling skills to cause mayhem.

**THE STORY SO FAR:** Hailing out of Kennington, south London, Sancho joined Watford aged seven before being snapped up by Manchester City two years ago. He was named player of the tournament as England reached the finals of the U17 Euros in the summer – previous winners of that honour include Toni Kroos, Wayne Rooney, Cesc Fabregas and, er, Connor Wickham. Sancho also helped Man City to last season's FA Youth Cup final but has now joined Dortmund and been handed

Ousmane Dembele's No.7 shirt after fearing that his first-team opportunities might be limited at the Etihad. Arsenal, Spurs and RB Leipzig had also expressed an interest in the sought-after youngster.

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** His Instagram page consists of clips of him tearing up unsuspecting defences, plus a video of him listening to music by rapper Lil Yachty, who has been known for sampling both the *Mario Bros* and *Rugrats* themes in the past. Random. **DID YOU KNOW?** Born in 2000, he is eligible for Trinidad and Tobago, where his parents originate from.

**CLUB** BORUSSIA DORTMUND **POSITION** WINGER

**VALUE**

£8m

**FOOT**

R

**HEIGHT**

1.80m

**NATION**

ENG

**AGE**

17

**WOULD  
YOU BUY  
THIS?**

## BORUSSIA MONCHENGLADBACH BUCKET

You know when you wander into the club shop before kick-off eager to buy a bucket, but you just can't find one anywhere? It's a constant source of frustration in English football, but not at Bundesliga outfit Borussia Monchengladbach: there you can purchase your bucket and then carry it natively under your arm during the entire matchday experience. It costs a mere €3.95, features the Gladbach crest and can hold 12 litres. Wunderbar.





## INTERVIEW

## DAVID VILLA

Recalled to the Spain squad at 35, the ex-Barça ace is thriving in MLS thanks to Patrick Vieira

**You have been in great form and have a good chance of winning this season's Golden Boot in MLS. How much different is scoring on the other side of the Atlantic compared to Spain?**

It is pretty much the same whoever you play for – I always do what I'm asked, which is scoring goals. It's my job. I'm happy with life at New York City FC. With the help from my team-mates and the coach, Patrick Vieira, I can continue to play at a high level.

**What's it been like playing for Vieira at NYCFC?**

He's got a great knowledge and understanding of the game and a great personality, too. Everybody in the team likes him. He always gives the players lots of information before matches and he'll study the games all of the time. He is at the club seven days a week, even on a Sunday. He's got a great future as a manager in front of him and I believe he will be very successful for many years to come.

**Do you ever talk about the days when you would line up against each other for Spain and France?**

Of course. Recently we talked about France against Spain in the last 16 of the 2006 World Cup. Both of us scored in that match, but France won and went all the way to the final, so he liked bragging about that a little bit! But it's no problem – we both won the World Cup and the Euros, so we're very happy.



**"VIEIRA HAS A GREAT KNOWLEDGE OF THE GAME AND IS AT THE CLUB SEVEN DAYS A WEEK. HE'LL BE A VERY SUCCESSFUL MANAGER"**

Interview: Martin Harsimowicz

# 3

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS



#### Galacticos stunned

Scores 17 goals in debut La Liga campaign with Real Zaragoza in 2003–04, and also finds the net in shock victory against Real Madrid Galacticos in final of Copa del Rey.



#### World Cup winner

Joint top-scorer at the 2010 World Cup with five goals as Spain lift the trophy. His country's leading scorer of all-time, he also topped the goal charts when La Roja won Euro 2008.



#### Wembley masterclass

Curled home a brilliant effort from just outside the penalty area to complete Barça's 3–1 victory over Manchester United at Wembley in the 2011 Champions League Final.



8

**MARKETER'S DREAM** PSG sold 120,000 Neymar shirts in the first month, earning the club £8 million. Another 2.8m shirts and they'll have recouped the full £200m

### What is New York like as a city?

My family loves it here and I love it too, but I came here to play football first and foremost. It's a metropolis but I've always played in large cities, so it was not too big an adjustment.

### People were pretty shocked when Thierry Henry was pictured using the subway on his way to training. Have you done that since arriving?

Of course, I do it all the time! Within the city I never use a car – it makes no sense because the traffic is really bad. I'll always hop on the subway.

### Do you ever get recognised by fans?

Occasionally I do, but so what? Fans never bother me. Sometimes they will want to take a photograph or ask me to sign something, which I will always do. I haven't got a problem with that. In life it's very important to appreciate other people, especially when they're being friendly to you. Whenever they stop me on the streets and smile or say 'Hi', I'm happy – it makes me feel good and hopefully they feel good too.

### What do you think about the other type of 'football' played in America?

I quite like American football. I went to a New York Giants game once and had a great time. I'm also a fan of baseball.

### Your NYCFC team-mate Andrea Pirlo is a fashion icon. Does he offer tips?

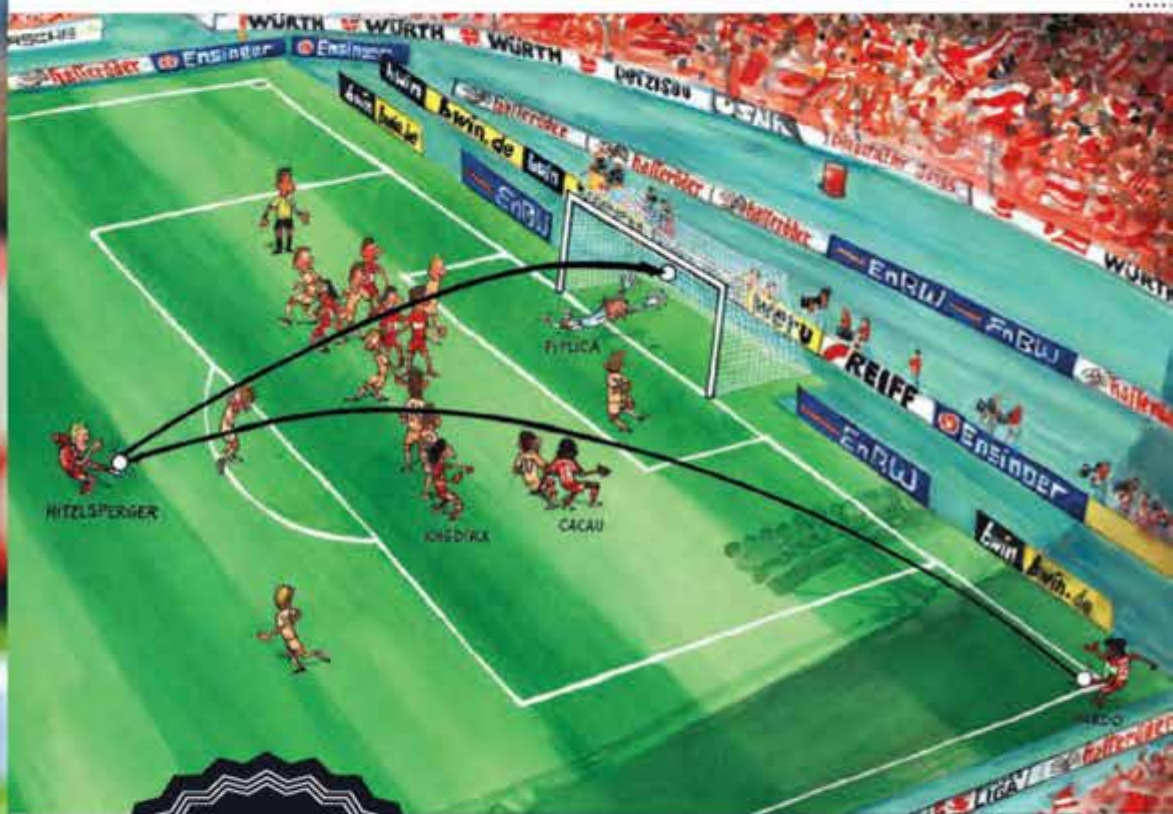
No, I have my own style! Every Italian man I know loves clothes, so Andrea is no different. He knows everything about fashion, but I don't really care very much about it so unfortunately he can't help me too much. [Laughs] But it's been amazing to go through this experience in New York with him, both on and off the pitch. He can pass the ball like no one else and he's also an amazing guy. I love spending time with him, because it is never boring.

### Did you have fun playing alongside Frank Lampard last season as well?

I liked Frank a lot. He was such a nice guy. He suffered a lot with injuries but whenever he played he was amazing. All the New York fans really loved him.

### What will you do when you retire?

I have not made up my mind yet and don't have a specific plan – I just live day by day and try to play football at the highest level. I feel good and am not thinking of retiring. I'm still scoring goals and hopefully I can win a trophy while I'm in New York. I believe I have got a few more years of ahead of me.



**GREAT  
GOALS  
RETOLD**

## Thomas Hitzlsperger

vs Energie Cottbus, Bundesliga, 2007

**Stuttgart won the 2006-07 Bundesliga after victories in their final eight games, but they needed a pearler from Thomas Hitzlsperger to help seal the title on the last day.**

Needing to secure at least a draw to stave off second-placed Schalke and clinch a first league crown in 15 years, Die Roten fell behind to an early Sergiu Radu goal at home to Energie Cottbus. Then Hitzlsperger made his mark.

The midfielder hung back outside the box for Pavel Pardo's right-wing corner, before firing a ridiculous volley past goalkeeper Tomislav Piplica from 25 yards.

"We practised it in training," Hitzlsperger reveals to FFT.

"Most of the players would be in the box, and I'd hide further back and pretend not to be part of it. Then, at the last second, I'd go closer towards the box.

"It was a great corner – it didn't have a lot of pace

on it to be perfectly honest, so there was enough time for someone to close it down, but they didn't. I smashed it almost in the top corner. It was good enough for the keeper not to save it – sometimes they come off, sometimes they don't."

Nicknamed 'Der Hammer', Hitzlsperger became famous for his long-range wallops in a career that also saw him star at Aston Villa and for Germany. He's in no doubt about the reason for that. "Practice!" he chuckles. "Obviously you start with a natural talent, and I always had a strong left foot. Even when I was little

I could hit the ball really hard. You keep doing it because it is a strength you have. People talk about it, so you try to show it off as often as you can to separate you from all of the other players."

That day in Stuttgart, it helped to write his name in the club's history books, as Sami Khedira headed home the winner and the Bundesliga title was theirs.



Interview Paul Wilkes; Illustration German Azcel





**JUST YOUR AVERAGE GUY** The coach of Brazilian team Parana was sacked for fighting his assistant, only a week after he'd asked the local press to "stop calling me crazy!"

DER KOLUMNIST

# LOTHAR MATTHAUS

English managers often struggle for opportunities, but things are different in Germany. *FFT's* columnist explains why young coaches have become a fashion statement in the Bundesliga

**W**hen I first started as a coach, my aim was to work in the Bundesliga. Coaching wasn't too easy at first. As a player I worked with Franz Beckenbauer and he expected that we would be as good as he'd been as a player. Maybe sometimes he expected too much. At the beginning of my coaching career, maybe it was the same. I was thinking: 'For me everything was easy, why can't my players do it as well?' You realise that you have to help them get to that level. That's your job.

In the end I never had the chance to coach at a big club or in the Bundesliga, but I'm not unhappy with my time as a manager. Sure, maybe I expected a little bit more, and maybe everybody expected the same because of my name. But when you don't have the players or the money, it's difficult. I always gave my best.

I worked at clubs with good names like Rapid Vienna and Partizan Belgrade, as well as the Hungarian national team. I've never heard a bad word from former players from any of the teams I managed. Everywhere I worked, I am welcomed back – OK, maybe not by the club but by the city. When I go back to Belgrade, for instance, they're all happy to see me. We reached the Champions League there and won the league, so I had my results as a manager, if not at the highest level. But it's not just about titles: it's about teaching young players and making them better.

That's something a lot of young German managers are doing very well at the moment. Julian Nagelsmann is the best example: he was 28 when Hoffenheim believed in him and made him manager and he's done a fantastic job – taking the club from really close to relegation, all the way to European competition. Hoffenheim's strategy is mostly focused on young players, and maybe a younger coach understands young players better than a coach who could be their father or grandfather.

Nagelsmann had coached the club's youth sides for five or six years before he took charge of the first team, and in Germany there's a system now where they believe in younger coaches. Due to Nagelsmann's success, it's the fashion now and other clubs are following suit: Schalke appointed Domenico Tedesco, who's 32 and had been a youth coach; Werder Bremen hired Alexander Nouri, who's 38 and had been coaching the second team. We have got a lot of managers now who are under 40.

There are positives and negatives to that: these managers aren't only working with young players. Some are superstars and if the team is struggling, they might say: 'Two years ago he was coaching the youth team, now he's telling me what to do?' But now you are seeing managers who did well with the youth team and are starting to work with those same players in the first team. That manager knows the mentality and strategy of the club. They have the feeling for what the club is about. In that way, the system can be an advantage.

In England the system is different, and at the top clubs there are only foreigners! That's strange, because I'm sure England has good coaches, but the people who manage the bigger clubs have all had high-level results previously. You can't be the manager at a big club in England without big results that get the attention of the owners.

That's not quite the same in Germany: Borussia Dortmund gave an opportunity to Peter Bosz after he did a good job at Ajax for one season. RB Leipzig have Ralph Hasenhüttl, a boss who followed the mentality of the club – focusing on young players, like Hoffenheim. With that philosophy, they've been doing very well.

Having said that, Bosz is Dutch, Hasenhüttl is Austrian and Carlo Ancelotti at Bayern Munich is Italian, so the only German manager in the Champions League is Jürgen Klopp. Liverpool have done well under Klopp – they can't get a better coach than him. And David Wagner has also done a great job with Huddersfield. For me, Huddersfield going up to the Premier League was probably the second biggest surprise in the history of English football, after Leicester winning the title.

**"IN GERMANY THEY BELIEVE IN YOUNGER COACHES. MAYBE A YOUNG COACH CAN UNDERSTAND THE PLAYERS BETTER THAN ONE WHO COULD BE THEIR GRANDFATHER"**

The status of German coaches is high outside Germany right now – even higher than inside Germany. Often you're nothing in your home country. Boris Becker is a legend in England and I am a hero in Italy, but in Germany it's different.

We have good coaches in Germany and the way we teach them is good – many countries look to Germany. They visit and want to learn from us. I see a lot of great potential in German coaching right now.



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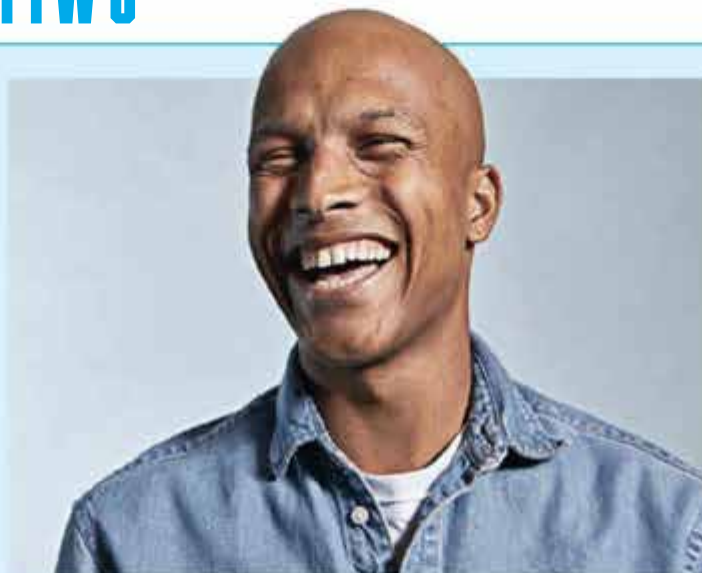
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## \*STAR LETTER

### JOE'S A TRUE HERO

By the time I had finished reading the article about Joe Thompson and his battle with cancer [FFT 280], I needed to sit and reflect for quite a while. What a brave, dignified and very humble human being. A man who's had a hard life but has got on with it and bounced back without complaining or feeling sorry for himself. A true hero – a person to be looked up to by all ages and professions. I hope Joe stays healthy and enjoys a long and happy life with his family.

**Matt Scott, via email**



### JONES IS SO UNDERRATED

In my opinion, Phil Jones is one of the most underrated defenders in world football. Everyone remembers him for the faces he's pulled and that bizarre header he did while flat on his chest against Arsenal. But others just don't realise that he put his body on the line to clear that ball, while also providing entertainment for fans at the same time. For that, he deserves a lot more recognition for his defensive work. He gets the job done in any way he can.

**Brandon Locke, via email**

### STOP THE CYNICAL FOULS

I would like to suggest a rule change to what you might call 'professional yellow cards'. We've all seen them on a regular basis: an attacker will receive the ball in a dangerous position, only to then get deliberately taken out by an opponent, to end the possibility of his team-mates conceding a goal. A yellow is too lenient – the fact that players are so regularly

happy to accept a yellow card proves that. A red card is not an appropriate punishment, but something halfway between could be suitable – a sin-bin or a one-game suspension in knockout competitions, or maybe yellow cards for that sort of offence should count double and lead to a ban sooner. This would produce more goals and ensure better attacking sides are rewarded.

**Thomas Johnson, via email**

### BUTLAND DESERVED NOD

As a Scotland supporter, the World Cup qualifiers have been a mixed bag, but it's been the same for England. Gareth Southgate's appointment settled things down, but media pressure has driven him to select players with experience rather than quality – players like Joe Hart and Jordan Henderson. Why he wouldn't pick Jack Butland for a small game against Malta to give him some first-team experience was beyond me.

**Luke McClelland, via email**

## TWEETS

**@GalacticKeegan**

Palace sacking De Boer after four games was awful. I said: "I'm gutted for you, Frank." He said: "I'm Ronald." I said: "Well, pass it on then."

**@afcMozart**

Cologne supporters wearing Arsenal shirts to sneak into Emirates. Something Theo Walcott has now been doing successfully for over a decade

**@Pirlo\_official**

Nice meetings in NY!



**@DavidHasselhoff**

Congrats to Wales! What a game! And Ben Woodburn! Nice goal!

**@DanLevene**

Qarabag manager Gurban Gurbanov taking 'steely' to a new level. Asked to tell us about his club, he just told us to 'do more research'. Ha

**@MaxPollard92**

Great write-up on AC London in *FourFourTwo*. What a story

## WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND THIS MONTH?



### IT'S ALL ON MESSI

Barça are in transition: Messi will always give them a chance to win trophies, but when he finally goes, what then?

**Mark Anderson**



### REDUCE BADGE FEES

I am going through my FA coaching badges and the fees are ridiculous – no wonder there aren't enough English coaches.

**Reece Oxlend**



### A WASTE OF INK

Contracts don't mean anything now: Philippe Coutinho and Virgil van Dijk both wanted to leave after signing new deals.

**Adesanya Adewusi**



### WITH THE PROGRAMME

I loved the feature on old Man City programmes in the Action Replay section of the previous magazine [FFT 280]. Great issue.

**Dave Wallace**



### JUVE OVERLOOKED US

Why was there no Celtic match in the 25 greatest games in the Champions League? The 4-3 win over Juventus was a thriller.

**Neil McCole**



**LAST MONTH'S SPINE LINE:** "It took a bit of reading, but I reckon I've got it. 'Loughborough 2-1 Burton Swifts' is the one game Loughborough won in the 1899-1900 season, matching Derby's 2007-08 season," says Isaac Morrison. Congratulations, you've won some Trusox. **Entering Spine Line via Twitter? Include #FFTSpineLine**



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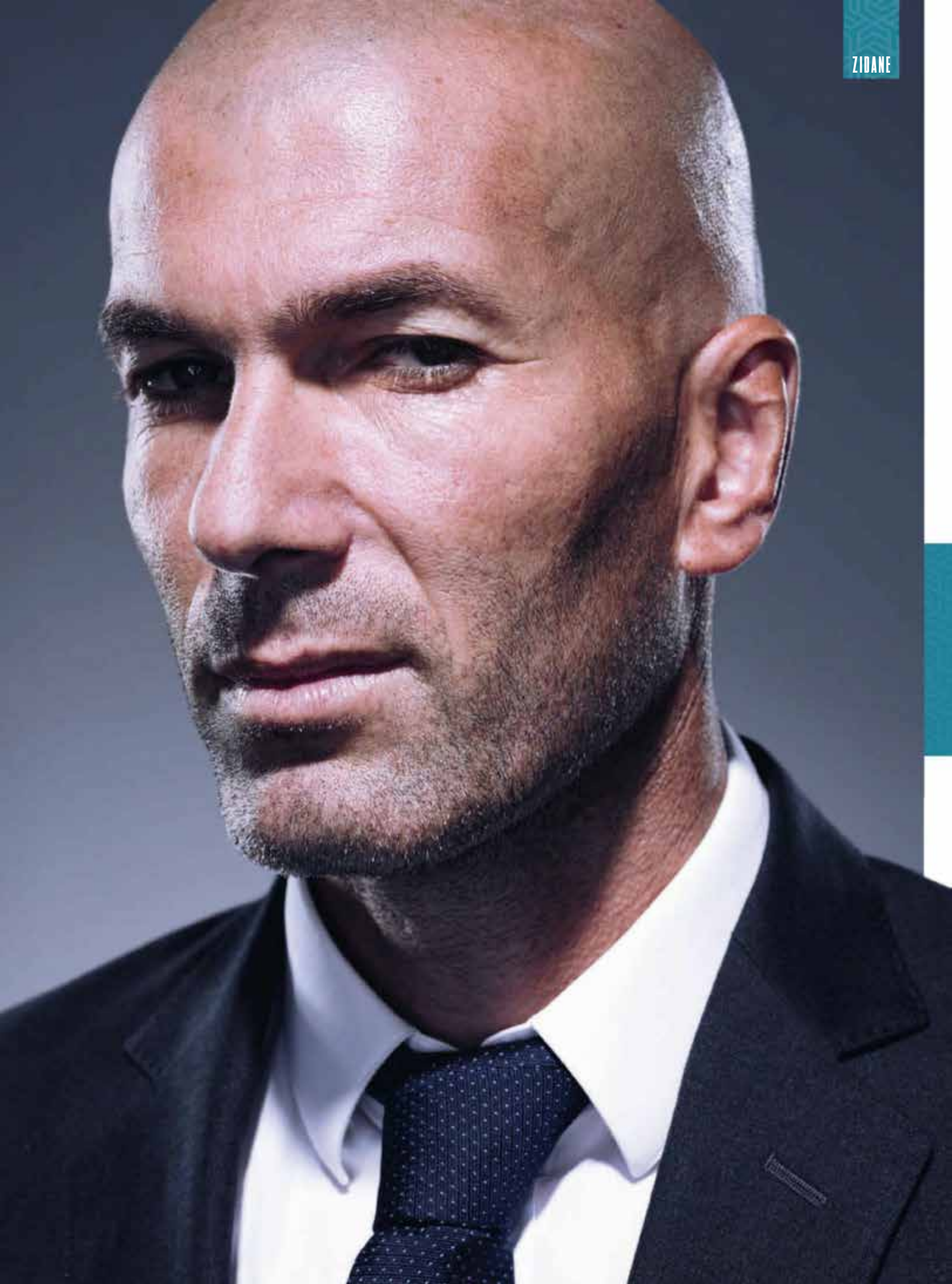


# RESISTANCE IS FUTILE

Winning back-to-back European Cups cemented Zinedine Zidane's status as a managerial mastermind, but if his dastardly scheme to secure world domination is to succeed, he'll need to be more ruthless than ever. Muhaha!

**Words** Andrew Murray **Additional reporting** Felipe Rocha **Portraits** David Clerihew









**R**eal Madrid's new manager is 25 minutes into his first press conference on January 5, 2016. The assembled press pack has tossed up the usual questions without much in the way of a standout quote emanating from the latest coach to climb aboard Los Blancos' *tritador de entrenadores*, 'the manager grinder' that gobbles up and spits out coaches with relentless regularity.

One question, though, has just piqued the newbie's interest. He stiffens in his chair, scratches his balding head and then adjusts the microphone in front of him. Finally, he shakes his head and fixes his steely gaze firmly to his left and the origin of the question.

What would Zinedine Zidane be happy with at the end of the season?

"Ganarlo todo." 'Winning everything.' He goes on. "Our objective is to win. We have two titles to win and by the end of the year, we want to have won both."

Third-placed Real Madrid are four points behind the leaders (and city rivals) Atletico, have lost the first Clasico of the campaign 4-0 against Barcelona and have been dumped out of the Copa del Rey for playing an ineligible player, Denis Cheryshev. On the horizon is a tricky-looking Champions League tie with Roma.

Los Blancos are in utter disarray, the majority of the squad barely on speaking terms with Zidane's predecessor Rafael Benitez. No one – not fans, players or journalists – believe this catastrophe of a season can be rectified. President Florentino Perez has only turned to a club legend, with just 18 months' third-tier experience as head coach of the club's reserves, because he knows the 1998 Ballon d'Or winner will at least unite a fanbase that is increasingly calling for his own head.

He is, at least according to the crowds of Barcelona-based sports paper *Mundo Deportivo*, "a plaster".

And all Zidane can contemplate from this impending car crash of a campaign is winning. Everything.

Eighteen months on from that promise, his team have won seven of the 10 competitions contested, including La Liga, two UEFA Super Cups and both Champions Leagues. They became the first team to defend the latter since 1990 and the only side to do it since the tournament's change of format in 1992-93. Real Madrid's 2016-17 double of La Liga and the Champions League was the first time they had won both in the same season since 1957-58.

"No one expected 'Zidane the manager' and I include myself in that," he admitted earlier this year. "When you stop playing, you think about things and take advantage of spending time with your family, but my idea was being on the pitch. I'm from the pitch. I really wanted this."





The manager who should never have been is now staring down the barrel of becoming the first coach in tournament history to win three European Cup titles in a row.

Exactly how did Zidane, the man whose playing career ended in such poetic headbutting ignominy, tame his inner fire to supersede former mentor Carlo Ancelotti, Jose Mourinho and Pep Guardiola to become the best football manager in the world? And in just 18 months, too.

### “ZIDANE HAD TO FIND HIS OWN WAY”

When Zinedine Yazid Zidane stuck his forehead into Marco Materazzi's chest with 10 minutes of extra time remaining in the 2006 World Cup Final, the greatest player of his generation wanted nothing else to do with football. He had won 15 major honours, including the World Cup, Euros and the Champions League, having become the beautiful game's Monet masterpiece, Beethoven symphony and Nureyev recital.

Such was Zidane's grace, you wonder whether he had studied every movement his wife Veronique – a professional ballet dancer until she was 18 – had ever made to pivot, plié and caress that left-foot volley into the top corner to win the Champions League final in 2002.

Born in the notorious Marseille neighbourhood of La Castellane to Algerian parents Smail and Malika, Zizou returned to his North African roots, became the face of a myriad products and, most importantly,

## MADRID'S 2017 LIGA AND CHAMPIONS LEAGUE DOUBLE WAS THE CLUB'S FIRST SINCE 1958

immersed himself in the daily family life that football had denied him. Every day, Zidane would pick his sons up from school and drive them to Real Madrid's Valdebebas training ground in his club Audi – afforded him as club ambassador – for training.

He'd sit incognito in the stands, wearing a scarf, hat and overcoat to avoid being recognised, and watch Enzo, Luca and Theo (while sitting with an infant Elyaz, too young to take part) take their formative steps in the game. He would then drive the brood back to the family home in Conde Orgaz – the upmarket, tree-lined Madrid suburb where the Zidanes have lived since first moving to the Spanish capital in 2001.

“I had lots of offers to carry on but I left – that tells you everything,” he told *FFT* back in 2013. “You get tired of it. I couldn't take it anymore. You're always in a hotel if you're playing every three days. In the early days it can seem fun, but not when you're 34 or 35. But you miss the adrenaline of playing. You'll always miss that.”

Those last two sentences proved increasingly instructive. Zinedine progressed from ambassador, to Perez's special advisor and link with the dressing room under Jose Mourinho in 2010, then sporting director 12 months later and finally Ancelotti's assistant in 2013. Yet nothing sated Zizou's adrenaline fix. The man who as a kid wanted to be a lorry driver, because people would depend on him, had to be a manager.

“He was looking inside himself for the best way to become successful through his own work, not just by being called Zidane,” brother Farid revealed about those intervening years.

“Yaz [those closest to Zidane call him by his middle name, almost as a badge of honour] missed the feeling of angst and pressure that the games produced inside him,” said his other brother Nouredine. “And he can feel that again now as a coach.”

Many were surprised when he took charge of Real Madrid Castilla, the club's reserve team, in the summer of 2014, but a handful had already witnessed the green shoots of a coach in him.

“Let me tell you, Zidane was one of the greatest players I've worked with in 40 years as a manager,” Paulo Campos, assistant to Blancos boss Vanderlei Luxemburgo from 2004 to 2005, tells *FFT*. “But he was never full of himself. He'd spend ages talking with a team-mate who didn't understand something or to give his own opinions on tactics.”

“You know that feeling of: ‘How did he think of that?’ Zidane didn't only think about it, he had another five options in his head as well.”

If Perez wanted Zidane to be Madrid's Pep Guardiola and guide the second-string outfit to promotion, the president was in for a shock as Castilla lost five of their first six games.

Zidane was also mired in controversy over his unfinished UEFA Pro Licence – the coaching qualification required to work in Spain's top four divisions. Having chosen the three-year course with the French FA instead of Spain's fast-track option for elite players, he would not finish his course until May 2015 – nine months after taking the Castilla reigns. The head of the Spanish coaching federation, Miguel Angel Galan, demanded Zizou's suspension. Real Madrid appealed the decision in court and won.

That first season was hardly an auspicious start.

“He had to find his way,” Guy Lacombe, Zidane's Pro Licence mentor and also the Frenchman's first coach at Cannes' youth academy when he was 15, tells *FFT*. “It was better for him to go through this early in his career. He learned just how difficult this job can be. He needed a year to grow.”

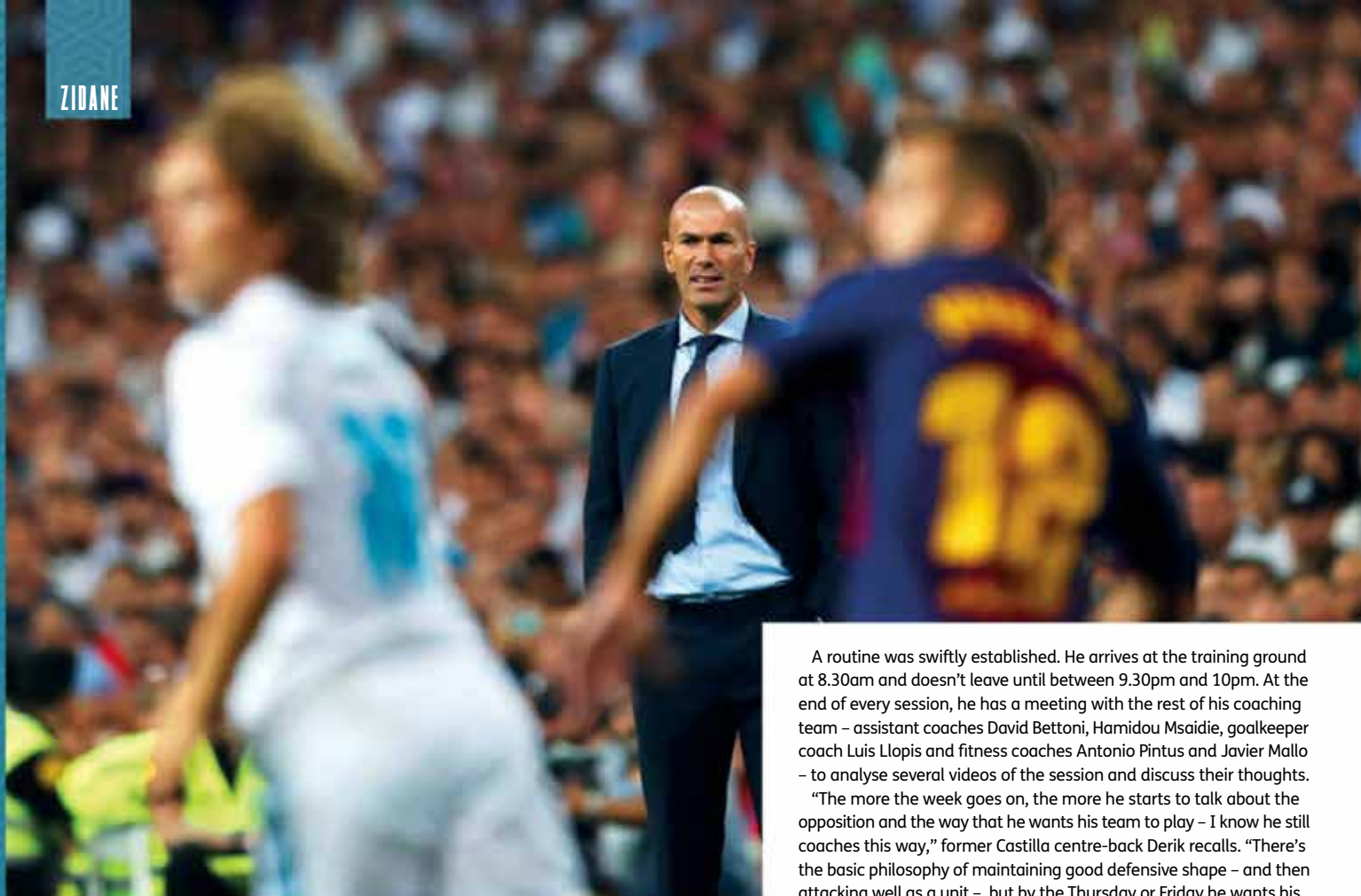
“He understood that, whatever your game plan, you have to compose something special: your players, their profile, how you work with them on specific aspects,” Lacombe adds. “The more he knew his players, the better things became.”

“The first day he was Castilla coach, we had a chat in the dressing room before we went outside to training,” Derik, Zidane's first-choice centre-back for that campaign, now on the books at Bolton, tells *FFT*. ▶

Left Zidane made history in Cardiff, having served as assistant to Carlo Ancelotti (below)







## “HE WANTS HIS PLAYERS TO TOUCH THE BALL, TO PLAY GOOD FOOTBALL, TO PLAY LIKE HE DID”

**Above** Zizou brought the happiness back to Madrid after “boring” Benitez was dumped

“I was surprised by how calm, and almost how shy, he was. He didn’t talk too much, but what he says wins your instant respect. He just said he wanted us to go out, train and enjoy ourselves.

“He’s very demanding. From the first day, he wanted us to play good football and to win promotion. We weren’t able to achieve that, but he was great at instilling a winning mentality.”

With Zidane passed over for the top job in the summer of 2015 in favour of Benitez (below right), it appeared another campaign of rope-learning was in store at Castilla. Benitez may have been the boss, but there was no ignoring the fox circling his hen house.

“We all knew that Zidane was the next option if Rafa didn’t finish the season,” *Marca* journalist Ruben Jimenez tells FFT. “To be honest, there hadn’t been much of an improvement in his Castilla side, but there was always the feeling that things would get better for Zidane with the first team.”

### “THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE MESSAGE: TO WIN!”

On January 4, 2016 – the day after a limp 2-2 draw with Gary Neville’s Valencia – Benitez was gone, just six months into a three-year deal.

President Perez got the morale boost he desperately desired. The following day, more than 5,000 fans turned up at Valdebebas to watch Zidane’s first training session. Such was the desire among Madridistas to get a first look of the returning Zizou, the atmosphere there was more like a matchday inside the Bernabeu.

Yet Zidane’s early days were about more than just living off his name. In addition to his trophy-winning ambitions, the 45-year-old’s opening press conference was notable for Zidane mentioning “work” no fewer than 14 times. He wanted it from his players and said he wouldn’t stop until he delivered success.



A routine was swiftly established. He arrives at the training ground at 8.30am and doesn’t leave until between 9.30pm and 10pm. At the end of every session, he has a meeting with the rest of his coaching team – assistant coaches David Bettoni, Hamidou Msaidie, goalkeeper coach Luis Llopis and fitness coaches Antonio Pintus and Javier Mallo – to analyse several videos of the session and discuss their thoughts.

“The more the week goes on, the more he starts to talk about the opposition and the way that he wants his team to play – I know he still coaches this way,” former Castilla centre-back Derik recalls. “There’s the basic philosophy of maintaining good defensive shape – and then attacking well as a unit – but by the Thursday or Friday he wants his players to understand the plan, and especially where the opposition is weakest so that you can exploit them – he’s ruthless in that regard.”

In between this preparation, Zidane still finds time for a 45-minute run, a session of Bikram yoga every day and, ideally, a game of tennis. He’s long since accepted he won’t get much sleep and gone are the days of picking his kids up from school.

“I’m convinced of the day-to-day work I will do with my players,” he said in that first press conference. “That’s fundamental and there will be only one message: to win.” It’s a philosophy that has remained with Zidane since his playing days at Juventus during the mid-90s. Talent alone is useless without the application.

Crucially, Zidane worked quickly to instil a harmonious atmosphere in the squad. His final words to the players before his maiden game in charge, against Deportivo, were simple and sought to establish rapport.

He said: “Go out there, have a good time and make the public enjoy themselves. Enjoy it.” That last phrase is repeated before every game. Madrid thrashed the Galician side 5-0.

“It was really tough and delicate period,” says journalist Jimenez.

“He changed the team’s mentality and brought a happiness back to the squad. He wants his players to touch the ball, to play good football. Basically, he wants his Madrid to play like he did, and that, compared with Benitez, is huge. Rafa’s football was boring, the players didn’t enjoy playing for him and his style had nothing really to do with Madrid’s identity.

“Zidane found himself in a dressing room where the previous manager had pretty much no relationship with the players and had lost 4-0 to Barça. Confidence was low and there was no real prospect of a trophy. It was the last card the president had left to play and now look at them.”

A natural introvert, common consensus had it that a lack of communication would be one of Zidane’s big problems. He hadn’t given a single press conference as Castilla boss, because third-tier rules don’t require it. “When the cameras are on me, I close up because I imagine that my family may be watching and that stresses me out,” he once admitted. And yet Zidane loves talking one-on-one with his players.

In part, it’s a learned behaviour.

“I remember the smile on his face when I used to say some words in Arabic to him,” explains Campos, who spent years



working in the Middle East before becoming Madrid's assistant boss. "It brought him back to his Arabic roots. Far away from Algeria, he had a friend to talk to in his mother-tongue. It brought us closer together."

Zidane's relationship with Karim Benzema is predicated on a similar rapport – both of Algerian descent, both introverts, both family men.

"He gives me everything," Madrid's revitalised striker has said of his manager and mentor. "He wants me to do well. He may not talk very much, but his words are certain and before every game he usually says something that makes me feel good."

When Benzema says his manager doesn't talk much, he's not joking. Team talks are usually restricted to two (a maximum of three) tactical points, because Zizou believes players aren't capable of remembering more once the match has kicked off.

"The most important thing is the message you transfer to players," Zidane claimed earlier this year in an interview with Mexican television. "I want there to be few instructions to the group. They're professionals and they know how to play. You keep things simple."

Ultimately, Zidane trusts his players and is merely tuning into what he appreciated most from his coaches in his career.

"If you've got a happy Real Madrid dressing room," says the former Castilla defender Derik, who regularly attended first-team training in his final three years with Los Blancos, "that means you're a very good coach, because it's not easy to keep so many big-name players happy."

"Results follow on from that. Every time they play, you see a united team which plays for its manager. He'd always talk one-on-one with his players and, given the great player that he was, you can't help but listen to what advice he has to say. There's no one better than Zinedine Zidane to explain what you're doing well and what you're doing badly."

Therein lies Zizou's other greatest strength. He may choose to swerve questions about his illustrious playing days at every opportunity, but who he is matters. One of the reasons why Benitez so alienated Real's dressing room was because he tried to teach Cristiano Ronaldo et al how to strike the ball at a free-kick, despite the Newcastle manager's modest playing career. The four-time Ballon d'Or winner met this kind of interference with great resentment.

Zidane instead challenged the Portuguese star to a training ground competition: a line of balls placed 20 yards from the goal, an inflatable wall and a goalkeeper – Zidane won.

"He was a better technical footballer than any of us," Chelsea striker Alvaro Morata, who played under Zidane in last season's historic Real double, tells *FFT*. "He could still be playing now, I'm certain of that. He would join in with the rondos or cross balls into the penalty area when we were doing shooting practice and they'd all be perfect. All of those things make you want to impress him."

"His name alone carried such weight in the squad," Morata adds. "He is one of the best players in history and that means when you become a coach, you have that added respect because of what you achieved as a player. He talks to you, he listens. That's his greatest strength and it tells you what sort of person he is."

### PUTTING THE ENGINE BACK IN THE BENTLEY

Those early months weren't without their teething problems, however. Given a tactical lesson by Diego Simeone during a 1-0 derby defeat to Atletico Madrid in late February 2016, Zizou turned to a player who had come to represent Rafa's stodgy team.

Casemiro is a no-frills defensive midfielder in the Claude Makelele role. So much criticism did Benitez receive for playing the Brazilian, he felt compelled to play Luka Modric and Toni Kroos as defensive midfielders in Real Madrid's 4-0 Clasicos humbling.

Yet in losing to Atletico, Zidane went back to Casemiro, and a 4-3-3, to sure up his defence. He persuaded president Perez it was a necessary move to allow Ronaldo, Benzema, Modric and Gareth Bale to prosper.

"Why put another layer of gold paint on the Bentley when you are losing the entire engine?" Zidane had famously said when Perez sold Makelele to Chelsea and replaced him with David Beckham in 2003, as the original Galacticos policy imploded. It took Perez 13 years, and a reminder from Zidane, to take note.

By April, Casemiro's high pressing set the tone for Real's Champions League quarter-final comeback against Wolfsburg, overturning a 2-0

# "WATCH OUT, CARLO, I'M COMING FOR YOU"

At the helm for less than two years, Zizou is already the fourth most successful manager in Madrid's history and sits second (just) in terms of win percentage

Name	G	W	D	L	GF	GA	Win %
Carlo Ancelotti	119	89	14	16	323	103	74.8
Zinedine Zidane	95	71	17	7	264	97	74.7
Jose Mourinho	178	128	28	22	475	168	71.9
Luis Carniglia	81	56	12	13	206	74	69.1
Jose Villalonga	105	66	14	25	269	141	62.9
Enrique Fernandez	50	31	8	11	126	60	62
Leo Beenhakker	197	121	47	29	404	185	61.4
Fabio Capello	98	59	24	15	187	96	60.2
Francisco Bru	118	71	13	34	290	152	60.2
John Toshack	101	60	24	17	234	118	59.4
Luis Molowny	180	107	34	39	393	194	59.4
Miguel Munoz	604	357	128	119	1,225	562	59.1
Bernd Schuster	75	44	9	22	156	100	58.7
Carlos Queiroz	59	34	11	14	113	76	57.7
Vujadin Boskov	139	80	31	28	249	136	57.55
Benito Floro	92	52	21	19	165	90	56.5
Alfredo Di Stefano	129	72	26	31	224	135	55.8
Vicente del Bosque	245	133	57	55	489	289	54.3
Ramon Encinas	84	45	15	24	199	126	53.57
Jorge Valdano	78	39	17	22	142	87	50
Lippo Hertzka	52	26	15	11	95	58	50
Miljan Miljanic	134	67	36	31	231	150	50
Jupp Heynckes	53	26	15	12	92	55	49.1
Baltasar Albeniz	51	25	7	19	123	103	49
Michael Keeping	82	37	20	25	192	153	45.12
Jacinto Quincoces	52	23	14	15	102	78	44.2

\*Up to September 19, 2017





**Above** Marco Asensio (left) and new arrival Dani Ceballos (right) show off the Spanish Super Cup – Zidane's seventh trophy since taking the Madrid job

first-leg defeat with a 3-0 win at the Bernabeu. Despite winning their last 12 league matches, the Spanish title was always unlikely, but the *undecima*, the '11th European Cup', was still tantalisingly close with Manchester City disposed of in the last four.

Simeone's Atletico handed Zidane the chance of tactical redemption. In truth, the game was very even, but Madrid's boss had to lead almost in spite of himself. Apart from his ethereal talents, the thing that most stays with you about Zidane's playing career is his temper. Thirteen of his 14 career red cards were for retaliation.

"I've had to learn not to show any tension, because that transfers to the players," he has said about the fire that still burns deep within. *Mas vale la maña que fuerza*, say the Spanish – 'brain is better than brawn'.

"The feeling that I have at the side of the pitch is totally different to playing. On the pitch, I could change things and sort things from time to time, but now it is just the players."

Before that 2016 Champions League Final, with his players all talking about "pressure" and "tension" in the build-up, Zidane's last words as his charges went down the tunnel eased all the nerves. Privately, many of those who took penalties in the ensuing shootout success admit to remembering the manager's short speech as they began their run-up. "I wish I could play." No one missed.

### "THE KEY THING IS THAT THE PLAYERS GET ON REALLY F\*\*KING WELL!"

That summer, Zizou sought to twist the knife on his rivals domestically and abroad. Yes, Real Madrid had won the Champions League, but it wasn't enough. He wanted to win La Liga, a competition Los Blancos had won only once in eight seasons.

To do so, Zidane knew he had to rotate and ensure his players were in the best shape for every game. "Physically," he had said at several intervals during the previous campaign, "we need to improve a lot."

The call went out to fetch fitness coach Antonio Pintus from Lyon. Zidane had hated the battle-hardened Italian's exhausting sessions when they first met more than two decades earlier at Juventus, but he never forgot the long-term benefits.

Pintus inflicted the same pain on the Real Madrid squad as he had on its head coach. On the opening day of pre-season there was blood, sweat, tears and vomit. Lots of vomit. Exercises ranged from balance to jumps and sprints, which were washed down with a 30-minute run. Every. Single. Session. For three weeks.

"Pintus has been so important," Modric said at the end of the season. "So much of this year is down to him."

With the players in better condition than ever, Zidane was confident enough to rotate. Though he missed out on his primary transfer target, Paul Pogba, academy graduates Diego Llorente, Alvaro Morata and Marco Asensio came back to the Bernabeu after spells away. All were hungry to prove their worth and slotted into the team when needed.

In the October of 2016, Real Madrid recorded 6-1, 5-1, 7-1 and 4-1 victories, all with different starting XIs.

## "HE'S STILL THE BEST ON THE TRAINING PITCH"

Not every elite player makes an elite manager. Here's how some of Zizou's fellow Ballon d'Or winners have fared in the dugout



### HRISTO STOICHKOV

The Barca icon has managed Bulgaria, Celta Vigo and Litex Lovech, amongst others, but hasn't enjoyed much success in the dugout. The two most likely factors are Stoichkov's hot-headedness (he's fallen out with several of his players), and his insistence that "I don't believe in tactics". His Bulgaria side once lined up in a 2-4-4...



### MARCO VAN BASTEN

The Dutch media were baffled when the inexperienced Van Basten became national team coach in 2004. His side shone brightly during the Euro 2008 group stage, before a surprise quarter-final defeat to Russia. Spells at Ajax and Heerenveen followed, before his tenure at AZ Alkmaar was cut short by a stress-related heart problem.



### RUUD GULLIT

For a while it seemed like the master of 'sexy football' could be joining the managerial elite: he helped put Chelsea on the map pre-Abramovich, winning the 1997 FA Cup. Yet it quickly went south up at Newcastle – he didn't get on with marksman Alan Shearer and dropped the striker for a loss to Sunderland. He walked out three days later.



### KEVIN KEEGAN

King Kev took Newcastle from the second tier to the brink of Premier League glory, before falling agonisingly short and eventually packing it in. Later bowed to public pressure and left Fulham for England, before quitting. Led Manchester City from the second tier and into Europe, before a brief, unhappy second stint with the Magpies.



### FRANZ BECKENBAUER

Lost the 1986 World Cup Final with West Germany but got his revenge against Argentina four years later at Italia 90. He then guided Marseille to the Ligue 1 title and European Cup final in 1991, prior to two spells with Bayern Munich which saw him seal the Bundesliga and UEFA Cup. Has since 'moved upstairs' rather than dwell in the dugout.



When Isco started against Atletico the weekend after the November international break – Benzema, Sergio Ramos and James Rodriguez were all rested – eyebrows were raised. Given a free role, the diminutive playmaker was fresh and excelled between the lines of Atletico's rigid defence and Real triumphed 3-0. It was, said *Marca*, 'un baño tático' – literally 'a tactical bath'. Zidane had effectively tucked Simeone up in bed with a cup of cocoa.

"The key is the relationship he's got with his players," believes Derik. "They are superstars, but Zidane knows when footballers are at their best moment and when to rest them, so they play the most important matches in the best condition. And they all accept it because of this."

The system wasn't, however, without its problems. Post-Christmas tinkering resulted in defeat to Sevilla, ending a 40-game unbeaten run, and a Copa del Rey exit to Celta Vigo.

'Doctor,' screamed the front page of *Marca*, 'this is serious.'

It remains Zizou's worst month in charge, with faceless club directors appearing in the press denouncing his experiment with a back three against Sevilla, in particular. A 3-3 home draw to Las Palmas resulted in some similar headlines. Eventually, with fewer changes made each week, confidence and wins returned.

"At the beginning, I didn't think it was good for the team," Modric later said. "When you play and then don't play, you think you're going to lose form. In the end Zidane showed us how important they can be."

"Now I think they're good, but it's also helped with how others have come in. We've won games because of them. Later, everyone has been talking about the 'A Team' and 'B Team' but we don't look at it like that. We're Real Madrid. One team! Any player who plays can do a good job."

No player benefited from the rotations more than Cristiano Ronaldo. Returning from winning Euro 2016 the previous summer with an injured knee, the Portuguese sat down for a meeting with Zidane. He told CR7, now 31, about his rotation plan, and that Ronaldo would still feature prominently but that it would help him prolong his career.

Zidane reasoned that, instead of reaching the end of the campaign drained – chasing La Liga's Pichichi trophy for top goalscorer – Ronaldo would peak at the season's climax fresher and be more able to affect the key fixtures, rather than the limited impact he had on the 2016 Champions League Final.

"Listen to me and we'll make history," he said. "It's because we need you that I want you to not play sometimes." CR7 only listened as it was Zidane doing the talking.

Zidane understands his talisman's need for praise like few others. "If I were in the same team as Cristiano," he said last season, "he'd be the

## "NO COACH HAS GOT ON BETTER WITH RONALDO AT REAL THAN ZIDANE. HE'S MADE HIM EVALUATE HIS CAREER BETTER – TO REST AND ROTATE"

star, without doubt." For his part, Ronaldo is "ecstatic" with Zizou as "he sees football differently to other coaches".

"No coach has got on better with Cristiano than Zidane," confirms *Marca* journalist Jimenez. "He's made him evaluate his career better – to rest and rotate."

Between March 18 and May 17, Ronaldo didn't play in a single away game in La Liga. He didn't even travel. Zidane and his coaching team realised that such is the beast that lurks within the former Manchester United forward, sitting on the substitutes' bench is no kind of rest. He wants to come on if things are not going well. At home, he can watch the match, devoid of that same stress.

It helped that, during those games, Isco and Marco Asensio came to the fore – the former's two goals at Sporting Gijon the definitive proof of Zidane's rotation policy in action. It didn't even matter that Bale got injured (again) in April's Clasico defeat.

This was a relentless winning machine, one which the manager had cultivated since his very first press conference. He'd done so by using the youth team to give first-teamers a breather. Fifteen years earlier, Perez's *Zidanes y Pavones* policy – Galactico stars supported by youth team graduates – had failed because the coaching structure wasn't in place. Now, Zidane's spell as Castilla coach has established that route.

"I see talent every day at Valdebebas," he told *FFT* in 2013. "There are players there who are going to make it, but 80-90 per cent will do so away from Real Madrid. I'm here to try to change that. You can't be a phenomenon in 10 minutes. There has to be continuity."

Morata, Nacho, Llorente, Lucas Vazquez, Dani Carvajal and Mariano and had all come through and were vital to winning a first La Liga title for five years, finally secured with a 2-0 victory at Malaga.

"I'd like to get up here and dance," Zidane said after the final whistle. "I'm not going to, but on the inside I'm very, very happy."

A 4-4-2 diamond, with Isco at the tip and Ronaldo upfront alongside Benzema or Morata became the go-to formation. Ronaldo found the net seven times in three Champions League games – five across both



### OLEG BLOKHIN

The Soviet Union's star striker of the '70s led Olympiacos in the early-90s (where he won the Greek Cup), then bounced around the Greek Superleague for a decade before taking the Ukraine job in 2003. He guided them to the quarter-finals of the 2006 World Cup, but in his second stint failed to get out of the group during Euro 2012.



### BOBBY CHARLTON

The attacking midfielder won almost everything as a player, but he couldn't follow that up with managerial glory. Bobby grabbed the reigns at Preston in 1973 but his first campaign ended in relegation to the old Third Division. Failure to go back up after his second season and a slow start to the third meant he left Deepdale under a cloud.



### JOHAN CRUYFF

When Cruyff returned to Barça as manager in 1988, La Masia prized physique over skill and waved goodbye to any decent teenagers who wouldn't grow to at least 5ft 9in. Lionel Messi, Andres Iniesta and Xavi are all 5ft 7in. In the 89 years before Cruyff, Barça won 40 trophies; in the 29 years since they've collected 48. 'Nuff said, really.



### STANLEY MATTHEWS

The first recipient of the Ballon d'Or moved across the Potteries to lead Port Vale in '67. Expelled from the Football League over financial irregularities – owing Stanley £7,000 in the process – the Valiants needed to use the former wideman's good name to get re-elected back into the league. Utterly disillusioned by it all, he never managed again.



### ALFREDO DI STEFANO

The Blonde Arrow guided both Boca Juniors and River Plate to league titles, as well as winning La Liga and the European Cup Winners' Cup while at Valencia. He was less successful at Real Madrid, finishing runners-up in five competitions in 1982-83 including La Liga, the Copa del Rey and the Cup Winners' Cup to Alex Ferguson's Aberdeen.





## “ZIDANE DIRECTS THE ORCHESTRA LIKE NO ONE ELSE. WE’LL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL”

**Clockwise from top** Zidane’s rapport with Ronaldo was vital to CR7’s decision to stay in the summer; “Give us a chance, gaffer!”; posing with ‘Old Big Ears’ for the second season in succession

legs to dispose of Bayern Munich in the quarter-finals and a hat-trick in a 3-0 first-leg win against Atletico Madrid in the last four – to prove beyond doubt the genius of his manager’s long-term plan.

June’s Champions League final against Juventus afforded Zidane his best chance to show off that acumen. For the week before the match, training session after training session was dedicated to low cutbacks from the byline back to the penalty spot, after Zidane noticed Juve’s tendency in their quarter-final victory against Barcelona to defend and protect the area immediately in front of keeper Gianluigi Buffon’s goal.

“The Juve defence are brilliant when it comes to crosses into the box, but not so much when it comes to low cutbacks,” said Modric after the 4-1 romp in Cardiff. “We worked on that constantly and that’s how we scored three of our four goals. Congratulations to the coach.”

That tactical twist is Zidane’s coup de grace, just when critics tried to dismiss the Frenchman’s achievements as a mere motivator.

“There’s no doubt there are still those who are convinced that Zidane doesn’t have a tactical brain, who think that everything is down to the players, but everything starts with him,” says journalist Jimenez. “He changed formations and brought in Isco, Asensio and Mateo Kovacic as well. That’s all down to his philosophy and football brain.”

Derek agrees. “You can say that he’s got great players, but they’re the same ones who didn’t have a great last season under Carlo Ancelotti

and struggled with Benitez. It doesn’t matter how good the players are, you’ve got to learn how to manage them.”

The celebrations, becoming the first Real Madrid coach since 1958 to win the league title and European Cup in the same season, meant so much to someone who has Blanco blood. Zidane said “gracias” 18 times in his post-match press conference.

“You enjoy it a bit more as a coach, because to achieve those victories is more difficult,” Zidane explained. “The key is that everyone has felt important. Above all else, though, the key thing is that all the players get on really f\*\*\*ing well.”

President Perez was no less ecstatic.

“Zidane directs the orchestra like no one else,” he said at full-time, confirming his manager and friend would continue into 2017-18. “We have the best players and are working on the youngsters. He’s changed our history ever since joining us in 2001 and we will always be grateful.”

### “MADRID ARE NOW THE DOMINANT FORCE IN EUROPEAN FOOTBALL”

No Real Madrid coach, not even Jose Mourinho, has enjoyed as much power at the Bernabeu. When reports emerged over the summer in the Portuguese and Spanish press that Ronaldo was looking to leave, feeling pursued by the Hacienda (Spain’s HMRC) over alleged unpaid tax and unsupported by the club over his upcoming court date, Zizou was the first person to pick up the phone. He wanted to understand the situation for himself.

“Cris, we need you,” said the coach from his family holiday in Italy. Quite apart from the Portuguese’s goals, Zidane explained, it was CR7’s winning mentality he needed the most.

Ronaldo appreciated the gesture, with his manager persuading the Ballon d’Or favourite to at least not go public and delay making a hasty decision. All the work that had gone into explaining how Zidane could help prolong his career meant the world’s best player remained in the Spanish capital. No one else could have overturned the iron will of this most headstrong of men.

Ultimately, all the players trust him. Ten days before the Champions League final against Juventus, Zidane marched into Florentino Perez’s office to say: “Keylor Navas is my goalkeeper.” Effectively, Florentino, don’t bother signing David de Gea. Navas may not be a star name, but his consistent excellence throughout three seasons at the Bernabeu – especially at the business end of the last one – and the easy-going atmosphere the Costa Rican creates in the group meant Zizou wouldn’t countenance his disposal.



Isco has developed into one of the best footballers in Europe under Zidane and was justifiably handed a Champions League final start in June, ahead of Gareth Bale.

"Pocos cambios," was the message over the summer. 'Few changes'. Kylian Mbappe – Perez's first-choice signing – could come in, but only if one of Ronaldo, Benzema or Bale was moved on. Zidane's compatriot instead joined Neymar at Paris Saint-Germain. There'd be no "bobma", a 'transfer bomb' which Perez prefers to animate Madridista support. Only Dani Ceballos – the 20-year-old Real Betis midfielder who starred at this year's European Under-21 Championship – and Theo Hernandez from city rivals Atletico, to provide left-back cover for Brazilian Marcelo.

He also sent James on loan to Bayern Munich for a couple of seasons. Increasingly unable to reach an acceptable matchday rhythm, when James mouthed "go f\*\*k yourself" while getting hooked 72 minutes into a routine win at Leganes last season, it was the final straw for Zidane. He's loyal, yes, but there are limits to his patience.

Such influence hasn't been without its increasing drawbacks, though. Zidane felt he could no longer stand in the way of forwards Morata and Mariano, both of whom he had seen rise through the youth ranks. The former scored three goals in his first four Chelsea matches, the latter four in five games for Lyon.

When Benzema injured a knee in mid-September to miss six weeks, Zidane's only natural No.9 was Borja Mayoral, a 20-year-old with just eight first-team experiences at Madrid, who had scored only twice in 19 Bundesliga appearances on loan at Wolfsburg throughout 2016-17.

For perhaps the first time, the coach had let his heart rule his head. "He wished me a lot of luck in the future and simply told me to enjoy my new chapter," Morata tells FFT. "He's always spoken about things to my face. That shows you what type of person he is."

"Looking at our squad, we may be missing a No.9," Zidane admitted after Benzema's injury in a disappointing 1-1 home draw with Levante, especially with Bale the frequent subject of whistles of disapproval from the Bernabeu faithful. "I would have liked Morata to stay here but he wanted to play more football, which was his choice."

That result was also notable for the return of an affliction unique to Real Madrid – *Cristianodependencia*: an over-reliance on Ronaldo. The Portuguese received a five-game suspension for pushing the referee in the Spanish Super Cup victory against Barcelona and missed that draw, plus another against Valencia.

For the first time, Zidane felt emboldened enough to criticise the ref. "I'm not looking for a fight with them, but anybody can improve and referees are no different," he said. "To think Cristiano will now miss five games, oof, something is happening there. I'm annoyed with this, like everyone, because for such a small thing, such a punishment is huge."

Zidane has allowed a mental block to envelope the Madrid squad. It was different when there was no Ronaldo through rotation – that was his choice. When denied their star, they couldn't overcome that hurdle.

"We need Cristiano now to score our goals," Theo Hernandez said. "We've had chances, but missed them."

All this, despite winning the Spanish Super Cup and the UEFA Super Cup with a scintillating display against Manchester United. For many, it's unseemly for a Real Madrid manager to criticise a referee, especially when it permeates through the squad's psyche.

"The epitome of anger's reached him at his best moment since being in charge," penned one columnist. "He should be all smiles, the same as always but multiplied by seven titles, but Zidane's warier than ever. His words have dominated the public opinion and the game has hardly been spoken about."

He criticised his players' attitude against Levante ("we're playing with too much confidence") and tore into the squad during half-time of the opening match of their Champions League defence at home to APOEL. According to *Marca*, Zidane claimed that his players had "no attitude, no intensity and no desire" after going into the break only one goal up. They went on to triumph 3-0.

"Madrid are now the dominant force in European football," Zizou had said after the victory in Cardiff. "Tomorrow we must show that again."

And yet, for the first time in 18 impossibly successful months, Zidane seems under pressure and tetchy, almost as if he's starting to become burdened by the intense weight of being the overwhelming favourites.



### LA DECIMA, UNDECIMA, DUODECIMA...DECIMOTERCERO?

These remain only minor grievances, compared to those experienced a few hundred miles north-east in Catalonia. Madrid's current team is their best since winning five successive European Cups in the '50s and it comes at a time when Barcelona's crown has slipped. Neymar's gone, the president is facing constant calls to resign and is due in court over the Brazilian's transfer, and both the club and Lionel Messi can't decide whether he's actually signed a new deal, which runs out next summer.

"After so many years of Barcelona dominance, that Real Madrid's best spell for years coincides with a moment of huge instability with Barça is quite the source of joy for Madridistas," says *Marca* journalist Jimenez. "Don't get me wrong, they're more interested in what's happening at the Bernabeu, though it does taste a bit sweeter."

Zidane has always wanted to create Real Madrid history. In 2003, he gave an interview saying he wanted to win "la decima, undecima and duodecima". He meant as a player, but he's secured Los Blancos' 10th, 11th and 12th European Cups as first assistant, then manager in 2014, 2016 and 2017. Unsurprisingly, his team are early favourites to claim *la decimotercero* – 'the thirteenth' – this season.

True, he hasn't elaborated on his plans from next summer, when his contract runs out, and has said "I know I won't be here forever", but he lives and breathes Real like few others.

"Look, Real Madrid are the best team in the world because of what they've achieved in the last two years," says Zizou's former charge Derik. "And by definition, the best team in the world is managed by the best manager."


On that subject, Zidane's remains unmoved. "Nooooo," he said when the question came up amid Cardiff celebrations.

Paulo Campos believes Zidane's success is unique among world-class players-turned-managers.

"Zidane studied to become a coach," he says. "He reached this point step by step. Being able to perform at the top level doesn't mean you completely understand the game, but his 'football intelligence' is rare. In the future, he'll be manager of an important national team, like France at the World Cup."

*Marca*'s Jimenez also puts Zizou in the highest bracket. His opposition is crushed, his squad fully behind him, his president enthral to his beat.

"He'll join an elite group of the best coaches in history with Pep, Cruyff and Ancelotti if he wins a third Champions League in a row," he says. "But personally, I think he's already there."

Immortality awaits. Again. 

Above Zizou's already equalled Pep's tally of European Cup victories

Below "Time for a rest? OK, seeing as it's you"







# AND THE BEST PLAYER IN THE WORLD IS...

# GORILLA?!!

Screaming fans, big-money prizes and smelly sweat towels – welcome to the life of a pro FIFA player. With eSports closing the gap on the real deal, *FourFourTwo* heads to the FIFA Interactive World Cup to witness just how serious video games have got

Words Ben Welch Photography FIFA IWC







# R

adja Nainggolan swarms N'Golo Kanté on the edge of the penalty area, before nudging the ball into the feet of Ruud Gullit. With two quick touches, he steps away from Antonio Valencia and then feeds Cristiano Ronaldo.

Marcelo, distracted by the threat of Gullit, is now stranded. All that stands between Ronaldo and goal is Thibaut Courtois. The Belgian races off his line like a scalded cat, saving at the feet of the Portuguese star. But the danger is not over just yet, as Nainggolan beats David Luiz to the loose ball and finds Gullit, looping it back towards the box. This time Courtois is not quick enough, and the dreadlocked legend pokes the ball through the shot-stopper's legs to hand England a two-goal advantage.

Cheers ripple up towards Central Hall Westminster's domed ceiling and FIFA TV's cameras pan across the audience towards a 54-year-old Gullit, rising to his feet to applaud the goal.

There is no way back for Germany now as England are unrelenting. Neymar adds a third before Rio Ferdinand diverts the ball into his own net to compound Die Mannschaft's misery. The full-time whistle goes and the Three Lions are world champions. "England are victorious in London," yelps the excited commentator.

Gullit, now minus his dreadlocks, takes to the stage to present the victor, Gorilla, with his trophy. The 20-year-old from Birmingham lifts it above his head as the confetti rains down on him and his adoring public. Tonight, he will celebrate in style with \$200,000 of winnings.

Wait. Hold on a minute. Gullit has come out of retirement to play for England and appears to be in two places at once? Cristiano Ronaldo is a German? What on earth is going on?

Let us explain. Firstly, nobody panic, *FourFourTwo* has not gone all Hunter S Thompson and gorged on drink and drugs while watching a game. And, sadly, this isn't a parallel universe where England have the nerve to overcome Germany in the final of a major tournament.

In reality, this is virtual reality and there's no ball, no pitch and no real players: just two control pads, two screens and two people who play video games for a living. This is the FIFA Interactive World Cup – and you'd better start taking it seriously.



It all started 13 years ago in Switzerland. Eight gamers qualified from regional tournaments in nine countries to battle it out at FIFA's Zurich HQ for the first ever Interactive World Cup.

In 2017, the finest 32 gamers from the around the globe – whittled down from more than seven million contestants – travelled to London to contest the latest eSports tournament.

Yes that's right, an official tournament. Playing video games is no longer confined to a spotty teenager's smelly bedroom – it's become a competitive cyber sport which generates giant viewing figures and lucrative revenue streams. This year's entrants battled it out for a prize pot that totalled a staggering \$1.3 million.

Instead of pleading with their parents to fork out increasing sums of money on expensive match tickets, the millennial generation are tuning into YouTube and Twitch to see their favourite gamers perform moments of mastery in a digital world. And there's plenty of room to grow: for comparison, in 2016 more than 43 million people watched the world championships of *League of Legends* – an action strategy game that has a larger audience than the actual 2016 NBA Finals.


Colossal audiences mean big bucks. Multinational bean-counters Goldman Sachs valued the eSports industry at \$50m in 2016 and the market is expected to break the \$1 billion barrier within a couple of years. And FIFA and EA Sports have undoubtedly got the product – with more than 100 million sales, the franchise has become one of the 15 best-selling video games of all time.



**Top right** The prestigious Central Hall Westminster played host to the globe's leading 32 gamers **Above** FIWC17 co-host Spencer Owen (middle) is an icon on YouTube thanks to *FIFA* **Below** Dani Hagebeuk did Ajax proud getting to the last 16, as the Dutch side attempt to reconnect with the younger demographic







**“LITTLE KIDS WERE ASKING ME FOR A PHOTO AND I THOUGHT: ‘WHY DO YOU WANT ONE WITH ME? ALL I DO IS PLAY FIFA’”**

The advent of live streaming and creation of Ultimate Team mode have helped it gain more ground on its competitors. Ultimate Team is a millennial Panini sticker album in which gamers build up fantasy football squads by purchasing randomised ‘packets’ of players online.

This enabled FIFA to open up qualification to their showcase event to anyone with the game. Participants just had to register and climb the monthly leaderboards to secure their place in the tournament.

“According to the Guinness Book of World Records, we’ve got the largest eSports competition in the world,” proclaims Jean-Francois Pathy, director of marketing services for FIFA. “We’ve got a growing community and in the last three or four years it has really taken off.”

Technology has helped to turbo-boost this progress, says Mickael Le Roscouet, PR manager for the French eSports club Team Vitality. “Internet connections were so bad 10 years ago you couldn’t watch a tournament online. As streaming steadily got more professional it became a lot more enjoyable to watch, attracting a much younger audience who also play the game.

“When someone asks you why you’re watching a video game, you can ask them: ‘Why are you watching a sport?’ It’s exactly the same.”

The rise of eSports has now got The Greatest League In The World worried, and Premier League executive chairman Richard Scudamore believes that digital gaming and social media are among the biggest threats to the game’s popularity.

“We don’t necessarily see other sports – I think that’s a little narrow, in terms of our competitors,” the 58-year-old explained. “I can see gaming, all sorts of digital gaming, and I see young people spending time on their devices doing all sorts of things to entertain themselves, and with social media generally.

“The interesting thing is whether this game will continue to engage them, and that is why we have to make sure we are doing everything we can to make sure it does.”

Audience figures suggest not. Last year, Sky TV suffered the biggest drop in viewers for live Premier League games since records began in 2010. The Football Supporters (Access) Bill 2016-17 revealed that the average age of adults attending top-flight games is over 40 and less than 10 per cent are under 22.

Priced out of going to watch live matches and many pay-per-view subscriptions, young fans feel disconnected from the game and the superstars they see from behind the tinted windows of their supercars.

FIFA plugs them back into this world, and they don’t feel like they’re getting a substandard product – comprehensive licensing deals have enabled developer EA Sports to replicate every aspect of the game.

That combination of realism and escapism has reeled in millions of players around the globe, from first-timers to future world champions. “I get together with my mates for FIFA tournaments and we all have a laugh,” explains professional gamer Shaun Springette, aka Shellzz. “It allows us to play with the best players in the world and have the likes of Ronaldo in our team, and that makes us feel like we are with them. That’s a good feeling.”

Forging a connection with a digitally scanned CR7 is not the same as meeting your hero in the flesh, no matter how good the HD likeness is. But pro gamers are now crossing that credibility gap by achieving celebrity status, thanks to their efforts controlling the computerised incarnations of real-life stars.

Springette, tipped as a contender for this year’s FIWC title, sampled a taste of this fame in May after coming second in the Ultimate Team Championship in Germany, picking up a cool \$80,000 in the process.

“Little kids were asking me for a photo in Berlin and I was thinking: ‘Why do you want a photo with me? I just play FIFA.’ eSports is only getting bigger and it’s just like real sports – you’ve got idols that you look up to and want to be like.”

Unfortunately, Springette is not able to replicate his form in Berlin at London’s Central Hall Westminster as the youngster crashes out of the event in the group stages.



The 18-year-old is distraught. He sits in the foyer, hood pulled over his face to soak up the tears as friends huddle round, patting his back and offering some support.

"It's horrible," he sniffles. "I sacrificed a lot to get here – sometimes not doing any homework or going out with my friends. To qualify for this tournament you had to play 40 matches every weekend, which is around 10 hours of gaming if you're never taking any breaks from it."



Being able to watch this drama unfold on social media and interact with their favourite gamers during real-time is hooking audiences in.

"It is an entertainment property now," explains YouTube star and eGamer Spencer Owen. "People are getting emotionally tied to these players, the clubs they represent and the storylines that are coming with rivalries between players."

Fans are feasting on these narratives and dreaming of writing their own. They know they will never face Cristiano Ronaldo at a real World Cup, but they might join Springette at the next Interactive World Cup – his fairytale is their fantasy.

"There's no requirement to be a good FIFA player: you don't have to be fit, you just have to be able to play the game well," says Springette. "Mohamad Al-Bacha was the winner last year. I thought: 'If he can do it, so can I.' That motivated me. I thought: 'I can be a FIFA pro.'"

Just like aspiring footballers trawl through YouTube for clips of their favourite players, aspiring gamers follow the top eSports stars hoping to pick up some tips and tricks.

FIFA superfan Daniel Smith is at Central Hall Westminster looking to do exactly that. Just the mere mention of the game brings out a big grin on his unblemished face.

"I love FIFA with a passion," gushes the 17-year-old, barely able to stand still. "The best pros are all here and I get to meet them, watch some good games of FIFA and hopefully learn a thing or two as well."

**FIVE YEARS AGO I SAID TO MY PARENTS 'I'M NOT GOING TO UNIVERSITY, I'M JUST CONCENTRATING ON FIFA'**

"They inspire a lot of the younger generation. You can become big from nothing and broadcast all of your games to millions of people."

Eyeballs attract income – from sponsors, YouTube ads and, if you're really good, a pro gamer contract. Brands are now starting to realise that they get more bang for their buck by investing in a social media influencer than advertising with a more traditional media platform.

One player who has achieved these goals is a personal favourite of Smith's. "I really like how Tass plays," he beams. "He does not crack under pressure." Unfortunately, that is not quite the case in London. Tassal Rushan finishes bottom of the Group of Death and makes an early exit from the competition.

After winning the regional championship in Paris earlier in the year, Tass scooped \$30,000 and was ranked No.1 in the world. This was his chance to be a hometown hero.

"I try not to let it affect me, but I'm disappointed because I won't have the opportunity to win in London again," says the 22-year-old.

This isn't just a game – this is a high-pressured job and when you've sacrificed your entire education for it, you had better make it count.

"Five years ago my parents were saying, 'What are you doing?' I had finished my A-levels and told them: 'I'm not going to university – I'm just focusing on FIFA.' Years went by and they said: 'If it doesn't happen soon, you are going to have to do something else.' But they showed patience and are happy now."

Despite the setback at Central Hall Westminster, Tass is still one of the best players in the world. His employer is Hashtag United, a real amateur football club set up by Spencer Owen. Broadcasting games on YouTube, they attract upwards of half a million views, pay him a wage and take a cut of his winnings.

Other real clubs are now following suit as they attempt to emulate Hashtag United and reconnect with an alienated young demographic.

Dutch giants Ajax are just one of them. Their representative at this year's tournament, Dani Hagebeuk, looks every bit the pro footballer: blond hair swept over to one side, blue eyes twinkling and a slender physique draped in the club's red and white jersey. He certainly looks the part, but does Hagebeuk consider himself part of the Amsterdam club in the same way as last season's beaten Europa League finalists?

"I'm not a real sportsman," he says. "But you need to have talent in your hands just like you need talent in your feet to play real football."

His talent sees him qualify from the Group of Death before bowing out to Basel's Florian Muller in the last 16. "I'm disappointed but proud of what I've done," Dani says in true footballer diction. "I'll get over it."

And he'd better, because Ajax are counting on him. They hope that his feats with a joystick will start to open up an array of opportunities.

"The Netherlands now has 1.5 million FIFA players and we want to connect with them," explains Bart van Essen from Ajax's marketing and eSports department. "The club set up an eSports department to reach that audience. We want younger people to become fans of the club as a whole – the first team, ladies team, academy and eSports."

"The response has been good so far. Last season we played eGames against Europa League opponents the day before the first team played them. Fans were invited to watch and we streamed the games online, getting 30,000-50,000 viewers."



**Right** 'Gorilla' scoops the title and \$200,000 cheque after a two-legged victory over 'Deto' **Left** Ruud Gullit was as surprised as us to hear he had scored in the World Cup final for England **Below** "Boof! Eat my goal"







This holistic approach is welcomed by FIFA – as in world football's governing body. The Zurich policy-makers want their members to see eGaming as an opportunity, not a threat.

"Younger fans are not turning away from mainstream football and FIFA is not a competitor – it has simply become a massive part of the football experience for them," says Owen, who's now got 1.9 million subscribers regularly tuning into his FIFA-related videos on YouTube.

"One day we will see these pro gamers switching between clubs on transfer deadline day, with Jim White announcing it in his yellow tie."

Jean-Francois Pathy agrees: "It's not a conflict of interests, it's more about spreading the message of football around the world. Gamers know the world of football through the video game – it is also fair to say a lot of them play physical football."

As FIFA's director of marketing services, he admits the commercial opportunities are exciting. "Everyone wants to hit the millennials," he adds. "However, we want to improve the way we deliver these events. This is already much bigger than where we were in the past. This time last year, the first-prize money was \$10,000. This year it's \$200,000.

"The way we put on this event is not so different from the way we put on other events – it's an elite event."

Which is why FFT finds itself among the cyber athletes, officials and fans at Central Hall Westminster – we want a peek inside this world.



Through the doors of the Grade II-listed building we find an elegant theatre entrance, with high ceilings and a marble floor which covers a spacious foyer area. We make our way up the Grand Staircase to the Grand Hall to discover a production set more akin to *The X-Factor*.

In the centre of a stage shimmering with bright lights sit the two finalists, Spencer Ealing (aka Gorilla) and Kai Wollin (aka Deto). They're plugged into a gaming pod, with wraparound headphones to cancel out any distractions. Their concentrated faces flicker with the action unfolding on the screens.

Each player's station has got a small hand towel, ready to dry their clammy hands as sweat loosens their grip on both the joypad and the game. A referee, draped in an oversized blue uniform, watches the pair closely, itching to penalise either player for any timewasting.

Towering above them in a commentary booth sit two analysts like DJs at an Ibiza superclub. Above their heads hangs a gigantic HDTV monitor for the audience. The lower tier is packed out with VIPs, while a smattering of fans occupy the upper tier. Cameramen from major broadcast partners NBC, Telemundo, Globo, DirecTV, Fox and Sky each point their lenses at the stage, transporting images to 104 territories. The tournament hashtags take over social media, with #FIWC being used more than 37 million times and #FIWC17 more than 53 million.

After two action-packed encounters, it's Gorilla who is crowned the FIWC champion with a 7-3 aggregate win. As the final whistle blows he hunches over in disbelief, putting his head in his hands. Dragonn – his coach and FIWC runner-up last year – runs on, arms pumping, his face full of joy. As they hug, he slaps Gorilla's back and yells: "That's what I'm talking about!"

Spencer Owen, Sky Sports' Laura Woods and Gullit greet the winner on stage to congratulate him and gather some post-match reaction.

"Suddenly, I became popular again," chuckles Gullit after watching his virtual self find the net in a major final he did not actually play in.

The Dutch icon says it in jest, though there's some truth behind his humour. Young people had never fallen out of love with football – their interest in FIFA is borne out of an enthusiasm for the real-world game. Innovations in technology, coupled with the arrogance and negligence of a hyper-commercialised industry basking in its riches, have altered the way they consume it.

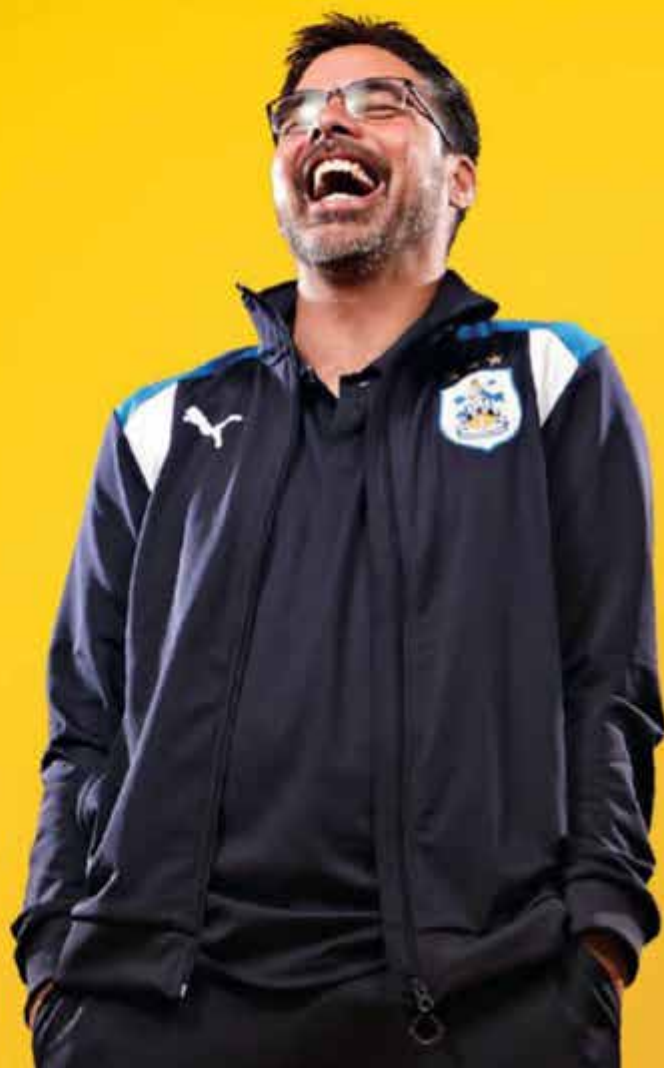
Younger fans wanted something they could experience themselves, rather than peer at through a window. FIFA and its new generation of cyber stars now provide them the opportunity to both watch and play.

So what's next? Can FIFA tournaments pack out stadiums? Will FIFA join *League of Legends* as a medal event at the Asian Games in 2022?

Christian Volk, head of digital marketing for FIFA, is in absolutely no doubt, and his words can be taken as either a promise or a threat: "It will grow and it won't stop."

Bring your sweat towel... 🧻







“ I COULD  
NEVER SIT  
ON THE BENCH,  
CLAP A FEW  
TIMES AND  
GO HOME ”

The irrepressible David Wagner was Jurgen Klopp's reserve-team coach at Dortmund and best man at his wedding, but having led Huddersfield Town to the big time, he's moved well out of his mate's shadow

Interview Chris Flanagan Portraits Jon Shard



**S**ausage and mash, fish and chips or a pint of John Smith's. Local retirees are mulling over their options as they drift into the bar area and peruse the menu, having shrugged off the light drizzle to complete an afternoon contest of crown green bowls. On initial glance, this could be any working men's club across the north of England, were it not for the smart 'Huddersfield Town' signage outside and the bloke wandering around reception bearing an uncanny resemblance to the Premier League Manager of the Month for August.

This is the most unlikely location from which David Wagner has masterminded one of English football's more remarkable success stories of recent seasons.

After the German has nipped into the team's private dining area for a spot of lunch – there's no sausage and mash for the players, mind – we head up to his office: a small room beside a gym, bereft of natural light. The club plan to upgrade their training ground over time, but the interaction with the public does not bother Wagner one bit – for one thing, the feedback's been pretty positive during the past year or so.

"Yes, it has been," the 45-year-old smiles, having led Huddersfield into the top flight against the odds, briefly taking them to the summit of the table after a stellar start to their first Premier League season. "But it is not that long ago, maybe 20 or 21 months, when I started here and we were only a couple of points above the relegation zone in the Championship. We lost the first two matches and went into the bottom three, but even then it was interesting to get feedback from the community, to get a feeling for the atmosphere around the place and what had happened previously.

"It won't help me if someone tells me while we are queuing for our food: 'Next game you have to play another formation'. But that didn't happen. The community has played a big part and will play a big part in the future, too. For our style of play, we need the energy and support from the stands – all that euphoria."

### "IN THE BEGINNING, KLOPP AND I WERE RIVALS"

Euphoria reached peak levels when Huddersfield overcame Reading in May's play-off final at Wembley, returning to the top tier for the first time since 1971-72, the season of Wagner's birth. The day after that penalty shootout success, the German stood in front of thousands of Town fans at a civic reception and thwarted the compere's beleaguered attempts to formally introduce him (as if he needed it) by continually pinching the microphone and starting some chants. "We are Premier League!" he yelled at the top of his voice, like he was the head of an ultras group rather than the gaffer.

Wagner has guided the Terriers from the brink of League One up to the Premier League by astute management, but also by sheer force of personality – even he's described himself as "a little bit crazy". His touchline exuberance has become the stuff of legend in this part of the world: few will forget his charge down the pitch to celebrate the winner against rivals Leeds in February, and the resulting contretemps with Garry Monk. If Wagner could have done without the two-match touchline ban and £6,000 fine, the incident made one thing very clear: he cares, and he cares an awful lot.

"I've never played a role, I don't really think about what I'm doing on the touchline," he says. "It happens sometimes – fortunately only sometimes because it's costing me money! I don't do it to make an impact on the players, I do it because that's just how I am. This is the only way I am able to do this job. I would never be able to sit on the bench, watch the game, clap a few times, analyse the game after the final whistle and then go home. That's not how I feel about this game. I love this game, the game excites me and I show that sometimes."

Wagner's enthusiasm and personality shines throughout his chat with *FourFourTwo*: he is engaging and jovial – you could happily talk about football and beyond for hours. The similarities with Liverpool's manager Jurgen Klopp are obvious.

Still the best of friends today, the pair first met when a 19-year-old Wagner joined Klopp at second-division side Mainz back in 1991. "It was love on the first view, as we say in Germany!" Wagner chuckles,



**Top** Wagner's touchline exuberance has landed him in hot water but it's been a hit in Huddersfield

**Above** "Give me that mic back!" The manager leads the celebrations following the Terriers' extraordinary play-off win at Wembley

paraphrasing the old English adage. "We became friends more or less from that very first meeting. We were able to communicate and we were on the same level. More or less right from the start we became roomies and spent every second around football."

All that despite Wagner pinching Klopp's place in the team upfront. "In the beginning we were competitors," he admits. "He was a striker and I was a striker. Then Jurgen became a defender and I think it was a good decision from the manager! You have to pay credit to Jurgen because he was a proper striker, a goalscorer, strong in the air and quick – I remember he scored four goals in one match once. But the manager said, 'OK, now you're a defender.' And he never moaned. He adapted and had a proper career as a defender."

The pair played together for four years, before Wagner progressed to the Bundesliga with Schalke. He helped them win the UEFA Cup in 1997 – albeit as a bit-part player, scoring once in the early rounds at Roda JC – but was an unused substitute when the Gelsenkirchen side clinched the trophy against Roy Hodgson's Inter at the San Siro. "That was the most successful period for me as a player, even if I was more of a sub," he says. "In that time I got eight caps for the USA as well."

The son of an American serviceman, Wagner represented Germany at under-21 level but got a USA call-up following a recommendation from his Schalke team-mate Thomas Dooley, narrowly missing out on selection for the 1998 World Cup. He also faced the unusual situation of lining up for the US despite not feeling entirely confident about his level of English – something Wagner even raised as a concern before taking the Huddersfield job a couple of years ago. ▶



**“IT HASN’T BEEN THAT LONG, MAYBE ONLY 20 OR 21 MONTHS, SINCE WE WERE TWO POINTS OFF RELEGATION FROM THE CHAMPIONSHIP”**





**“YES, I WAS KLOPP’S BEST MAN, BUT I’VE GOT NO IDEA WHAT THE SPEECH WAS LIKE – I DRANK FAR TOO MUCH ALCOHOL THAT NIGHT”**

“As a player it is easier – if you didn’t understand the manager, you just took the ball and tried to do something with it!” laughs Wagner, demonstrating that his language skills are no longer a problem at all. “But my English was a problem when I was with the USA squad. Even though I was playing for America, if you ask whether I feel German or American, I clearly feel German.”

His departure from Schalke and return to Germany’s second tier at FC Gutersloh would bring him face-to-face with his old mate Klopp, in an October 1998 home match against Mainz. *FFT* asks if that clash rings any bells. “Yes, yes!” he smiles, the pitch of his voice briefly rising.

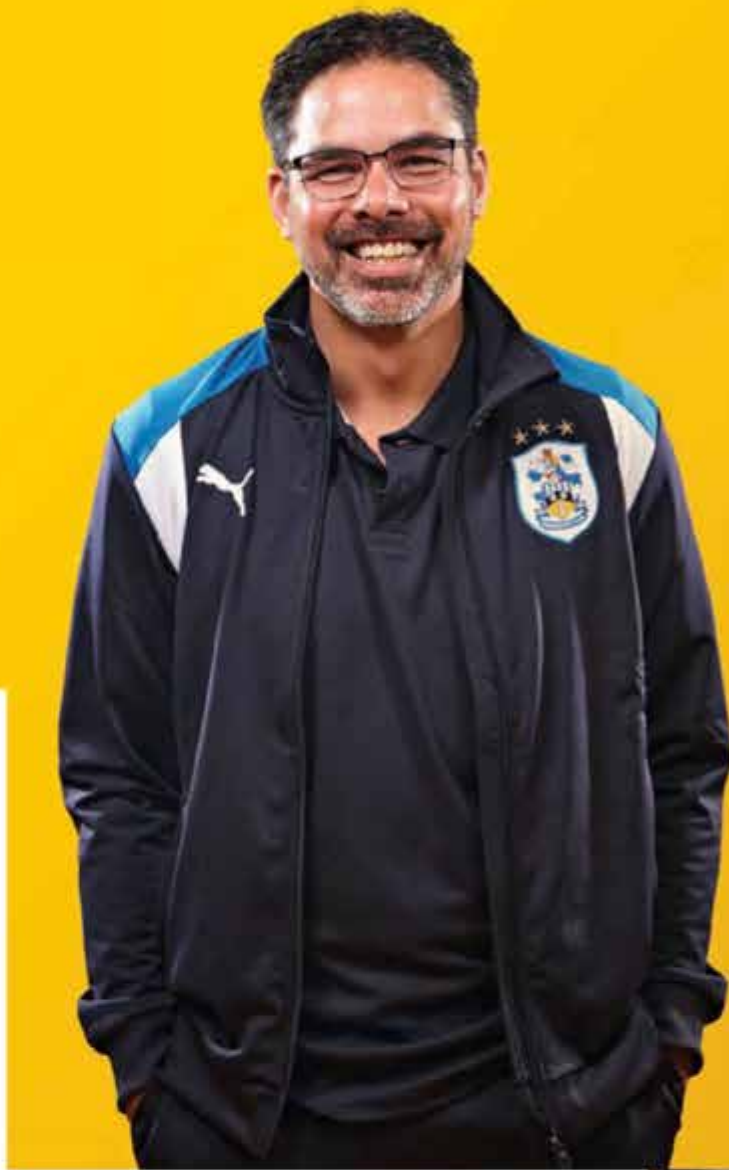
No wonder he remembers it: despite being a regular in that team, Wagner scored only three league goals that season and all of them came in that game against Klopp as Gutersloh won 6-1. “Actually, maybe that was my best day as a footballer – not the UEFA Cup with Schalke!” he adds with a cheeky grin. “It was a crazy day – we were playing directly against each other because I was the left-winger and Jurgen was playing as the right-back. I think I was nearly on my best form that day, and he probably wasn’t! That was the only hat-trick of my whole career as a professional.”

Is it mentioned often when the pair meet up? “No, but sometimes it comes on the table – if he flies too high then I give this information back to him!” smiles Wagner. “Maybe before we go to Liverpool I will remind him of this day in the past!”

That game at Anfield is on October 28. With plenty more fixtures to play before then, Huddersfield’s gaffer is not thinking about it yet, but he knows there will be media interest. He’s never been that bothered one way or another by the comparisons, the temptation to view him as some sort of clone, as Klopp 2.0.

“I can live with it – listen, I understand all of the excitement in this story from the media,” he says. “Two best friends – sometimes I’d say it is more like a family member than a friend – working as managers, working in England and now working in the Premier League, maybe only 60 miles from each other. I totally get that this story is great for the media. But for me, he is only my friend, just like he was my friend 25 years ago. For me, it isn’t something really extraordinary that he is Jurgen Klopp the football manager. That is the case, yes, but even if he was a chef he would still be my friend and I would still have the exact same relationship with him.”

The duo speak regularly – even more regularly this campaign, when Klopp has been able to offer useful advice about the Premier League. But if Wagner hopes his team can compete with Klopp’s at the end of this month, there’s one area where he’s never been able to compete – as revealed when *FFT* quiz him about the time he was best man at the Liverpool manager’s wedding in 2005. “Yes, I was the best man, but I’ve no idea what the speech was like because I drank too much alcohol that night!” he laughs. “I’m not the best drinker – I need two beers and it’s enough. He’s miles better at drinking alcohol than me!”



**“AM I PROUD OF PROMOTION? NO, I’M PROUD I FINISHED UNIVERSITY”**

It was Klopp’s departure from Borussia Dortmund in the summer of 2015 that ultimately paved the way for his friend’s relocation to Huddersfield that November, after four years as the manager of *Die Schwarzgelben*’s second team. “I had some other offers when I was working for Dortmund, although never any from England,” he admits. “It was never the right timing. I was really happy with the job I was doing – in Dortmund you can earn good money, even as the second team’s coach – and I never had it in my head to go and hunt for the next level. But then some circumstances at the club changed in the six months before my exit.

“Stuart Webber was head of football operations at Huddersfield at the time. The chairman wanted to make a change and Stuart made some phone calls to agents. The agents in England said, ‘We have no idea who to recommend.’ But these agents then phoned up agents in Germany and one of them mentioned me. I met up with Stuart and the chairman, and had the feeling, ‘OK, it’s the right time to move on.’ Obviously it has paid off.”

It most certainly has. Today, Wagner sits here as a Premier League manager – quite the turnaround for a man who once quit the game altogether and studied for a degree in biology and sports science at Darmstadt University. “I seriously came to the decision to leave the football family because I just wasn’t hungry any more,” the German says. “I thought, ‘There has to be something else.’ At the beginning I enjoyed not having so many rules, not having so many people who tell you what you have to do. You are your own man, and I felt free for the first time in my life when I started to study. But if you’ve got this football virus in you it will come back, and after two or three years that was what happened.”







**Top and bottom** Wagner has built a sense of unity within the Terriers' camp which he says has helped the club to "overachieve"  
**Left** Best friend Jurgen is "miles better at drinking" than Huddersfield's boss



Wagner made sure he finished his degree, however, even though it proved to be the most challenging experience of his life. "I had to leave my comfort zone," he reveals. "To be honest, if I'd known before I started how hard it would be and how long it would take to get that degree – five years, five f\*\*king years – I would never have started it. But I finished it. People ask me if I'm proud of what I've achieved with Huddersfield? No. I'm happy for the people. I like to see all the happy faces, but I am really proud that I finished university with a degree in biology and sports science. It has helped me for the job I have done since, as now I know what's going on inside the bodies of the players we're working with. If somebody asks me what the biggest success in my life is, apart from getting married and then having two wonderful daughters, it was to get my degree."

Qualification obtained, Wagner was soon offered a role as coach of Hoffenheim's under-19 side under Ralf Rangnick, one of the earliest exponents of the *gegenpress* system. Two years later he left football again and started training to become a schoolteacher, before Klopp came calling with Dortmund in 2011.

Huddersfield finished a lowly 19th in the Championship at the end of Wagner's debut campaign in England. But fortunes would change dramatically after his first pre-season with the Terriers, when he took the squad to a tiny Swedish island, confiscated their smartphones and instructed them to live off the land.

"We spent three days and four nights in the wild without electricity or the right food, no heating, nothing," he says. "We wanted to bring the group together as quickly as possible and we wanted to put them in a situation where they had to leave their comfort zone. If we really wanted to be successful – we wanted to overachieve, although it was never in my head to get promoted – we all knew we had to leave that comfort zone." Their treat on the final evening was to watch England against Iceland on TV, although for the team's English contingent it probably felt like more punishment.

However, the camp created a unity that carried them all the way to a surprise promotion to the Premier League, despite operating with a reported wage ceiling of just £10,000 per week. Bundesliga outfit Wolfsburg were said to have offered Wagner the chance to become their new coach midway through 2016-17, but he turned them down to the surprise of many in Germany. Huddersfield were fourth in the Championship table at the time and few onlookers believed that his side could really reach the top flight.

"Without going into any names, yes there were offers and maybe some people were thinking, 'How can he turn them down?'" Wagner explains. "But I thought, 'This story isn't done yet.' It wasn't the right time to leave this great football club."

On August 12, that football club was on top of the Premier League after a 3-0 victory at Crystal Palace on the opening day of the season. "Before the match I had no feeling of what would happen," Wagner admits. "The pre-season games had gone OK. We'd had our setbacks with injuries, so I was prepared for everything – defeat, draw, success. But the players then showed so much trust and belief in themselves."

What's next, then? Would Wagner still take a 17th-place finish at the end of the campaign? "Last season we said that we wouldn't give ourselves a limit and before this season I said to the players, 'We can use exactly the same phrase again,'" he explains. "We won't be giving ourselves a limit. Would I take 17th? No, because maybe we have the chance to get 14th or 12th. But would it be a success for us if we stay up this year? Yes. With the resources we have, it would be comparable to winning promotion last season."

"We're aware how difficult it will be. We are very humble. We know we're far from the strongest club financially, but that does not stop us from being ambitious and investing everything we have in every single game, so at the end we can say, 'Yes, we got the maximum out of the season.' If we're able to say that, we'll be in a place in the table we're happy with. I'm totally sure about it."

Wagner hasn't been wrong about many things since he rocked up in West Yorkshire. If he's right once again, the perfect reward won't be too far away in May. Take your pick, lads: sausage and mash, fish and chips or a pint of John Smith's. 🍷



# ANY QUESTIONS?

Be they teary confessionals, expletive-filled rants or long lists of “facts”, routine press conferences can prove to be a minefield for footballers, managers and owners alike – as *FourFourTwo* discovers

Words Alec Fenn, Jon Spurling







## JIMMY'S MISSION TO PELE'S PUNCH-UPS

It's not just pre-match tactics on offer when players and managers face up to the cameras

**W**hen Manchester City were found guilty of financial irregularities after a 1906 FA enquiry, Manchester's press gathered en masse inside the city's Queens Hotel. They were all there to document the sheer bewilderment of the Blues' slack-jawed directors as they witnessed the fire sale of their best player, Billy Meredith, to arch enemies Manchester United. There might not have been a large club-branded desk, a room crammed full of cameras or a press officer overseeing proceedings but, in a sense, this was one of football's first ever 'press conferences'.

Likewise, when Leeds City were chucked out of the Football League in 1919 for making illegal payments to players, gentlemen of the fourth estate assembled at the smoky environs of the Metropole Hotel to watch the entire playing staff being auctioned for a grand total of £9,250.

Fast forward 40-odd years and, thanks to his extensive connections in the media, PFA chairman Jimmy Hill was able to hastily convene London press gatherings in the early-1960s, at which he argued that the maximum wage was unethical. During a Savoy Hotel presser on January 9, 1961, he declared the abolition of the maximum wage – a historic day for the sport.

Thanks to the arrival of the television age, managers and chairmen became more high profile. Liverpool supremo Bill Shankly regularly held court with journos for hours on Friday afternoons before games. And the tyrannical Burnley chief Bob Lord (who was dubbed the 'Khrushchev of Burnley'), delighted in informing groups of local writers that he was going to ban the BBC's cameras inside Turf Moor, because he believed that the onset of televised games would destroy the sport.

The attendance – or not – of Brian Clough at press conferences always added a bit of frisson to matters. Following his controversial exits from both Derby and

Leeds, Clough directed proceedings with several reporters in corridors outside the boardrooms at the Baseball Ground and Elland Road, while respective chairmen Sam Longson and Manny Cussins – blinded by camera bulbs flashing in their eyes – briefed some other members of the press in a rival gathering a few yards away.

In 1979, when Trevor Francis was confirmed as British football's first £1 million player, Cloughie turned up late for the televised gathering armed with a squash racquet. "I will whack him with this if he makes a balls of signing it," Clough promised. Towards the end of his tenure at Nottingham Forest he opted out of press meetings, insisting: "You s\*\*houses never tell the truth," but even he deemed it appropriate to attend his final gathering in May 1993. Sporting his trademark green jersey, one member of the media scrum, Brian Glanville, asked Old Big 'Ead whether he would get bored with life without football. "I'll ring you if I'm bored, Brian," responded a pithy Clough.

Prior to the 1970 World Cup, Brazil manager Joao Saldanha invited the press to the training ground where, following pressure from the country's dictator General Medici to include striker Dario in the squad,



Below "I wouldn't say I'm the best manager in the business, but..."

## "YOU CAN'T SECOND GUESS THE PRESS"

Eddie Howe's managerial career has led him from League Two to the top flight – and the Bournemouth chief's noticed a big change in media interest down on the south coast

**Have you ever had to take part in any press conference training?**

No. I have been quite lucky because when I first became a manager, Bournemouth were a club in League Two so press conferences were basically one-on-one chats with the local journalist. I think that was a good grounding for me before being exposed to bigger groups and the different types of questioning as we rose up through the leagues.

**How have you managed to adapt to the increase in media scrutiny?**

The jump from the Championship to Premier League was huge. We'd never had any attention nationally and then suddenly we were being talked about every week. The atmosphere during Premier League press conferences is different and it's very hard to prepare. You learn every week through experience.

**Does your press officer brief you on potential lines of questioning?**

I am briefed on certain questions that he thinks might come up, just to give me an understanding of the tone of the questions and what they may be about. But there are never any certainties, because quite often there will be some things which get thrown in that you cannot second-guess. I think the relationship between myself and Anthony [Marshall, the Cherries' head of media and communications] is really important at the club. I need to be able to trust him and vice-versa.

**Is there a type of question you find particularly tricky to answer?**

It's hard when you get asked about something you know little about. As a Premier League manager you get asked about politics, current affairs and anything major that's happening in the world. The media want you to have an opinion on pretty much everything, and if you don't know anything about a subject you'll end up saying something you didn't mean. I have a rule that I'll only talk about subjects that I have good knowledge of.

**Is it important to develop a decent rapport with the local media?**

You definitely need to have a good relationship with the local press. If you don't really get on with certain people, your job can become a lot more difficult. It's a mutual relationship as you both need each other and you will both benefit from it. I've tried to be approachable, contactable and honest from the start of my managerial career and my relationship with the local paper has lasted through to this day.

**Are press conferences a useful tool to boost morale at the club?**

I have personally never used them for that purpose, but I think other managers have done. I get that, as managers have to use every tool available to them to try to motivate their team, or appease the fans, and improve the atmosphere that they're playing in. I try to be honest with the media and fans, and give a true account of what I'm feeling at that time. That's the approach that has worked best for me so far – I never try playing games.

**Some managers don't like talking about tactics. Are you the same?**

I'll be honest, I always try to avoid talking about tactics as much as possible because I don't want to risk giving the opposition any sort of advantage before a game. You can easily give them clues about how you might set up. I very rarely mention my potential starting line-up as well – I like to give the opposition as little information as possible.



# MANAGERS' HIDDEN MESSAGES

Gaffers are often giving away more information than they really intend, explains body language expert Geoffrey Beattie

## THE JOKER'S LAUGH

Some managers will project this image of being super-happy all of the time – but obviously that isn't possible.

It could well be a coping mechanism to disguise any negative emotions. It's very difficult not to reciprocate a laugh or smile so it can change atmospheres. Chimps will bare their teeth to signal a lack of fear – perhaps that is what the managers are doing as well.

## STANDING ROOM ONLY

Standing up is often an attempt to gain control of the situation. There is a link between height and power, so when someone stands above us, it can give them a certain air of authority. In the case of a manager, he will be looking over journalists like a teacher, which will then give him a strategic advantage. If his feet also remain planted on the ground, it will cover up any shifty movement, which could reveal his true emotions.

## THE GALLIC SHRUG

A shrug of the shoulders with his palms faced up is often a gaffer's way of saying he does not agree with something. It is a very defensive movement and almost a sign of surrender – he is bowing to the weight of pressure and expectation. However, sometimes a manager's body language can quickly change from defeated to borderline aggressive – this is his way of saying: 'I am not finished yet.' He's refusing to throw in the towel.



the wild-eyed boss announced: "I don't pick the general's government ministers, and so he doesn't pick my forward line." The combustible Saldanha was fired shortly afterwards, and new coach Mario Zagallo didn't need much convincing to include Dario (who was benched the whole time) in 'his' final 22. Not that it mattered much anyway.

Arguably, the most shocking press conference took place in January 1995, when a tearful Paul Merson confessed to his alcohol, gambling and cocaine addictions. The infamous revelation was the first evidence in the Premier League era that massively-monied football stars were struggling to keep their personal lives in order away from the pitch.

The element of surprise is often essential to a memorable presser. Manchester United forward Eric Cantona later revealed that midway through his famous "seagulls" and "trawlers" speech to an expectant room of reporters at Croydon's Jury's Inn Hotel – in the aftermath of his kung-fu kick on Crystal Palace fan Matthew Simmonds in February 1995 – he had a brief sip of water not to help lubricate his throat, but to stop himself from laughing.

These days, major signings are announced directly to fans via social media, so by the time new arrivals are introduced to the press there is very little scope for surprise – but that hasn't always been the case. There were audible gasps of shock from those present when, during a specially convened conference in 1980, two-time Ballon d'Or winner Kevin Keegan was revealed as the new Southampton recruit. A clutch of London-based journalists were left kicking themselves in June 2001 after deciding that they'd all dodge the (apparently) low-key arrival of Ipswich goalkeeper Richard Wright at Arsenal's training ground, when none other than Tottenham skipper Sol Campbell emerged from behind a curtain to be unveiled as Arsene Wenger's latest signing. A bunch of newspaper editors lambasted their men for missing out on one of the decade's greatest transfer scoops.

For pure mayhem though, Pele's arrival as a New York Cosmos player in June 1975 takes some beating. Outside New York's famous 21 Club, 51st and 52nd Street, plus Fifth Avenue, were scenes of complete pandemonium. The Samba star himself was two hours late as he could not get through the crowds, and two rival photographers had a fist fight as they battled to get a picture of the Brazilian in the famous Hunt Room – buffalo skulls and all – smashing up a glass table as they scrapped. "Absolute chaos – more photographers than I'd ever seen in my life," said Cosmos general manager Clive Toye. "The most bizarre thing ever."

## THERE WERE AUDIBLE GASPS IN THE ROOM WHEN KEEGAN WAS UNVEILED BY SAINTS

Left Kinnear let rip at a critical journo in his first presser as Newcastle boss



# WHEN PRESSERS GO WRONG

Blowing your top in front of the gathered press might not seem like the best idea, though that hasn't stopped many, many managers (and owners) from doing it...

### VITOR GETS VICIOUS

Things were going swimmingly for Vitor Pereira at Saudi side Al-Ahli, until the former Porto manager decided to criticise one of his players in front of journalists. It prompted a swift on-mic interjection from the club's press officer, insisting he shouldn't criticise individuals in public. But Pereira then lost it. "It's the first time in my life someone has told me what I can say," he cried, before storming out of the press room.

### THE RETURN OF J'F'K

Subtle may not be a word that features very highly in Joe Kinnear's vocabulary – but c\*\*\* evidently is. The ex-Wimbledon and Luton boss singled out *Daily Mirror* writer Simon Bird for some very choice words in his opening presser following his surprise appointment at Newcastle United in 2008. "Which one of you is Simon Bird? You're a c\*\*\*," Kinnear said bluntly, before embarking on a 10-minute expletive-riddled tirade at a host of shocked journalists. No prizes for guessing what the 'F' stands for...

### GOD FORGIVES, JESUS DOES NOT

Atletico Madrid's portly former president Jesus Gil tested his new pacemaker by going to watch the Rojiblanco's 4-3 loss to Villarreal back in 2003. He wasn't impressed with what he witnessed. "There are too many bloody passengers," Atleti's head honcho later raged about the squad. "Luis Carreras, Santi and Jorge Otero are not good enough. I feel like not paying them and anyone who does not like it can die!"

## HE SAID WHAT?!

Managers, players and chairmen have come out with press conference gems down the years – but who said what?

1

"Juventus bought the referee, of that there is no shadow of a doubt"

2

"It's true, I underwent a hair transplant. I think the results are pretty cool, don't you?"

3

"We have to show desire, hunger and a lot of times I used the word 'horny' to my players"

4

"[We play] a kind of orgy football. The other team know they're going to get it. But they don't know from who or where"

5

"Some eggs are more expensive than others and some will give you better omelettes. When the class one eggs are not available you have a problem"





## “FERGIE WOULD DELIBERATELY INTIMIDATE JOURNALISTS”

As Manchester United correspondent for the *Manchester Evening News* since 1995, Stuart Mathieson can provide more of an insight than most into Alex Ferguson’s press room prowess

### TRAP BLOWS HIS TOP

Giovanni Trapattoni blasted his Bayern Munich players over a lack of commitment in a bizarre rant in his own unique version of German in 1998. “In this game, it was two, three or four players who were weak like an empty bottle,” bellowed the Italian following a 1-0 defeat to Schalke. He then stormed out and resigned only three weeks later.

### “I’LL CALL YOU BACK...”

Roy Keane isn’t a particularly happy man at the best of times. So it wasn’t a huge surprise when he took umbrage to a journalist letting his mobile phone ring not once, but twice during a press conference while he was the manager of Ipswich in 2009. “Why don’t you turn it off?” snarled the happy-go-lucky Irishman. Had it rung once more, we suspect the reporter would’ve needed the hands-free function.

### FROM FERGIE WITH LOVE

Angered by reports in the Spanish press that Real Madrid were set to sign Cristiano Ronaldo, Alex Ferguson responded with a firm denial. “Jesus Christ, I wouldn’t sell that mob a virus,” the Scot snarled. He never did agree to the sale of a lethal strain of influenza, although Ronaldo ended up at the Santiago Bernabeu the following summer.

### FACTS OF LIFE (AND DEATH)

Liverpool were seven points clear of Manchester United at the top of the Premier League in January 2009 when Rafa Benitez fell victim to Fergie’s mind games. Reacting to the suggestion the Reds’ had a more favourable run of fixtures, the Spanish gaffer pulled out a piece of paper and began to read a list of “facts” about the Scot’s conduct. United went on to secure the title by four points from the Reds, and years later Fergie claimed his rival’s tirade ‘killed’ the Liverpool boss.

### ENTER HEAD IN THE SAND MAN

In 2015, Leicester gaffer Nigel Pearson called journalist Ian Baker an “ostrich” for questioning him after he said his team had been unfairly criticised. When pressed on his choice of flightless bird, Pearson explained the reporter had his head in the sand (which, to be fair, makes sense), before calling him “daft” and “stupid”.



#### Can you remember your first ever press conference with Ferguson?

It was at the Cliff – United’s former training ground – and it was very nerve-racking. It was an intimidating environment, because Fergie was so unpredictable. You never knew how he was going to respond to a certain question. His mood could completely change in an instant.

#### Do you think he would deliberately try to intimidate journalists?

Definitely. If you phrased a question wrong in a press conference he would belittle you, which would dent your confidence. He could deter journalists from asking certain questions by responding in a particular way. But there were times when you were convinced you were about to get the hairdryer and then he’d be normal. He kept you on your toes.

#### Can you remember the worst bollocking you received from him?

I asked a very simple question: ‘Are you happy with Danny Welbeck’s start to the season?’ The expression changed on his face and he tore strips off me – even the other journalists in the room were stunned. The following week Welbeck scored at Real Madrid. I asked the same question and he gave me the answer I had wanted first time around!

#### Did you have ways of defusing his rage?

I think persistence was the best method. If you were afraid to ask him questions he would smell weakness. I’d always continue to ask him the questions that I needed for my story and I think he actually respected me and the other journalists for doing that.

#### How did he compare to David Moyes and Louis van Gaal?

David wasn’t quite as confident. He wasn’t as comfortable fielding questions when he knew it was on live television. That was probably because he didn’t have the same success behind him that Fergie had. Louis had a reputation for being fiery but he was engaging – you could have a laugh with him.

6

“[Jose Mourinho] can do or say whatever he wants. In this room he is the f\*\*king chief, the f\*\*king boss”

7

“Even if I built a 50,000-seater stadium and bought Ronaldinho, there’d still be complaints about crap hot dogs”

8

“Martin O’Neill makes me look like Mother Theresa”

9

“I want you to write stories and see who can make up the best ones. When I get tired of them, I’ll let you know where I’ll go”

10

“Veron is a f\*\*king great player, youse are all f\*\*king idiots”



# FANSPO



**ANCIENT  
SPECTATORS**



**GENTLEMEN  
PIONEERS**



**SCARF-SWINGING  
RATTLERS**



# TTING

Words Paul Brown Illustrations Lovatto

From ancient Roman fanboys to stat-wielding internet snobs, *FFT* presents a rundown of football fandom's wild and varied tribes – but to which do you belong?

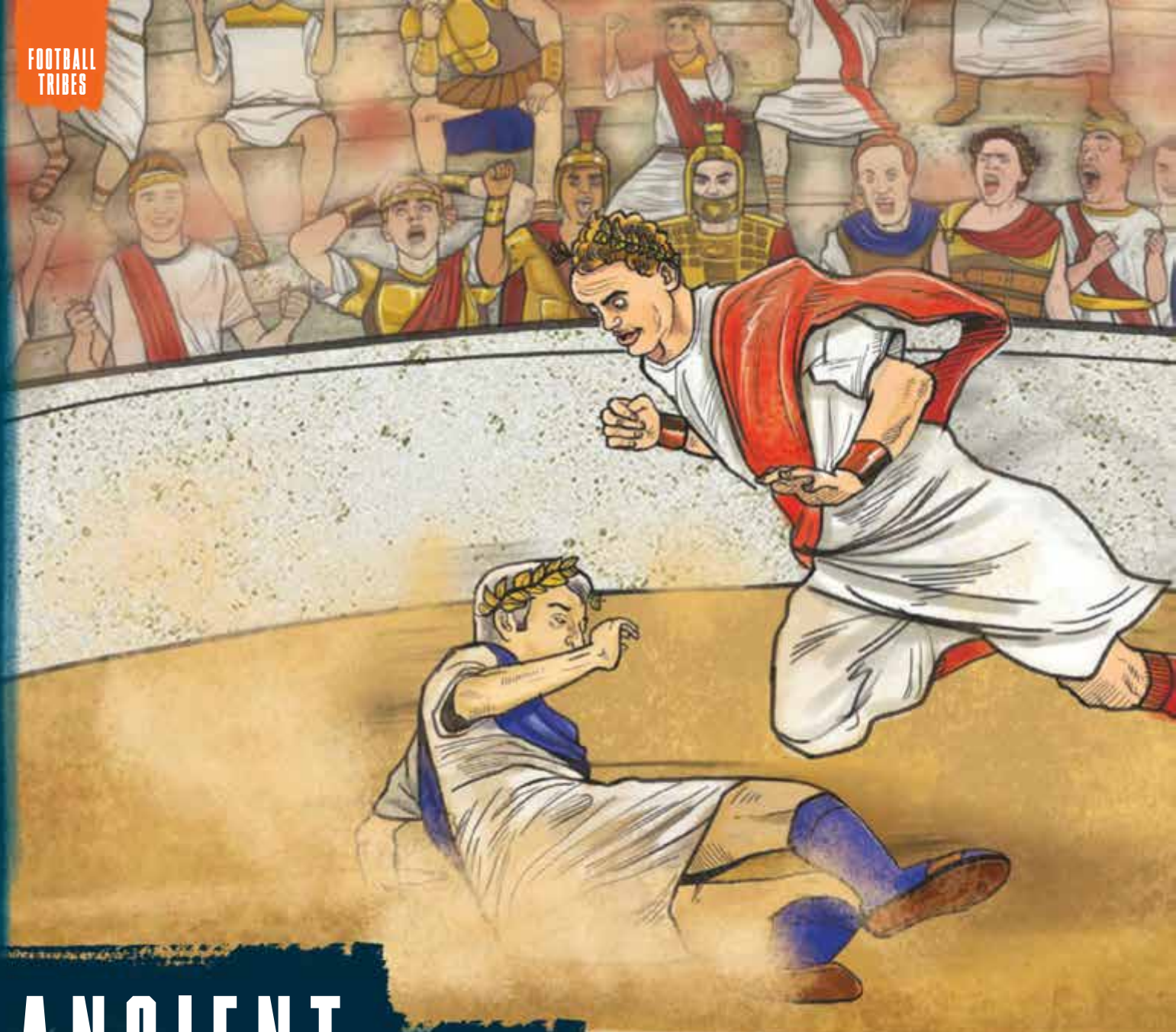


FANZINE  
ENTHUSIASTS

HORRIBLE  
HOOLIGANS

FOOTBALL  
HIPSTERS





# ANCIENT SPECTATORS

Fans have watched football for as long as it's been around – and ancient forms of it were played more than 2,000 years ago. One of history's earliest-known fans of the beautiful game is a boy depicted on an Ancient Greek vase – dating from the fourth century BC – which is now in the Acropolis Museum in Athens. The lad, in his birthday suit rather than a replica kit, is shown gazing in wonder at a man playing a primitive form of keepie-uppies.

The Romans watched a version of the game called harpastum and, as far as popular entertainment of the era was

concerned, it was certainly less brutal than seeing Christians chucked to the lions (this was still a fair while before Lee Cattermole, don't forget).

One historical report talks of a crowd of toga-wearing harpastum fans yelling a series of familiar-sounding criticisms: "On the ground!", "Too short!", "Pass it back!" A skilful player by the name of Piso even had his own fan song, which would begin: "To watch such play the populace remains stock still..."

Well, it beats yet another half-arsed reworking of *Achy Breaky Heart*, right?

## GAWPING VILLAGERS

As footballing spectacles go, traditional village matches would have taken some beating. These chaotic and often violent folk (or "mob") encounters brought havoc to the streets of competing towns and villages across Britain for hundreds of years, from medieval times through to the Victorian era. Matches involved hundreds of players and lasted for several hours, and there were numerous accounts of broken legs, fatalities and full-scale rioting. No wonder all of those straw-chewing yokels were enthralled.

Villagers would line the streets, hang from windows and clamber onto roofs to gain decent vantage points. They inevitably supported friends and neighbours from their own villages and the atmosphere was fiercely partisan, creating some tasty rivalries. Fans would hurl flowers at their favourite players and chuck mud at their adversaries. The local children would chant for their favourite teams and, as the games stretched on and on, the supporters would revive exhausted players with refreshing tankards of ale.

## FLAT-CAPPED WORKERS

Working-class football fans emerged from the factories, mills and foundries during the 1880s. Changes to working hours legislation meant they now had Saturday afternoons off, so they washed off the factory dirt, changed into their lounge suits, pulled on their flat





**ANCIENT FORMS OF FOOTBALL  
WERE PLAYED 2,000 YEARS  
AGO – THE ROMANS WATCHED  
A VERSION CALLED HARPASTUM**



caps and went off to the football. The newly-popular game provided a welcome escape from working life and represented cheap, exciting entertainment at a time when there were relatively few alternatives.

The typical admission fee for an early Football League match was sixpence. The majority of fans would stand on terraces, where they'd sing and smoke and sway in anticipation of the game. More affluent fans might pay extra to sit in the pavilion, or up in the gallery above the refreshment booth. And fans looking for the traditional matchday drink of Bovril would find that, in the late-1800s, it was marketed – rather unappetisingly – as “Johnston’s Fluid Beef”.

The blue-collar workers were among the first generation to receive a compulsory elementary education, meaning they were able to read – and they were all very keen to learn about their new favourite sport. They would devour the newspapers’ expanding football coverage and circulations began to soar. Supporters would gather in their hundreds outside newspaper offices to find out updates from the away games. These were initially sent via carrier pigeon, before the installation of telegraph poles at grounds allowed for faster, less-feathery bulletins.

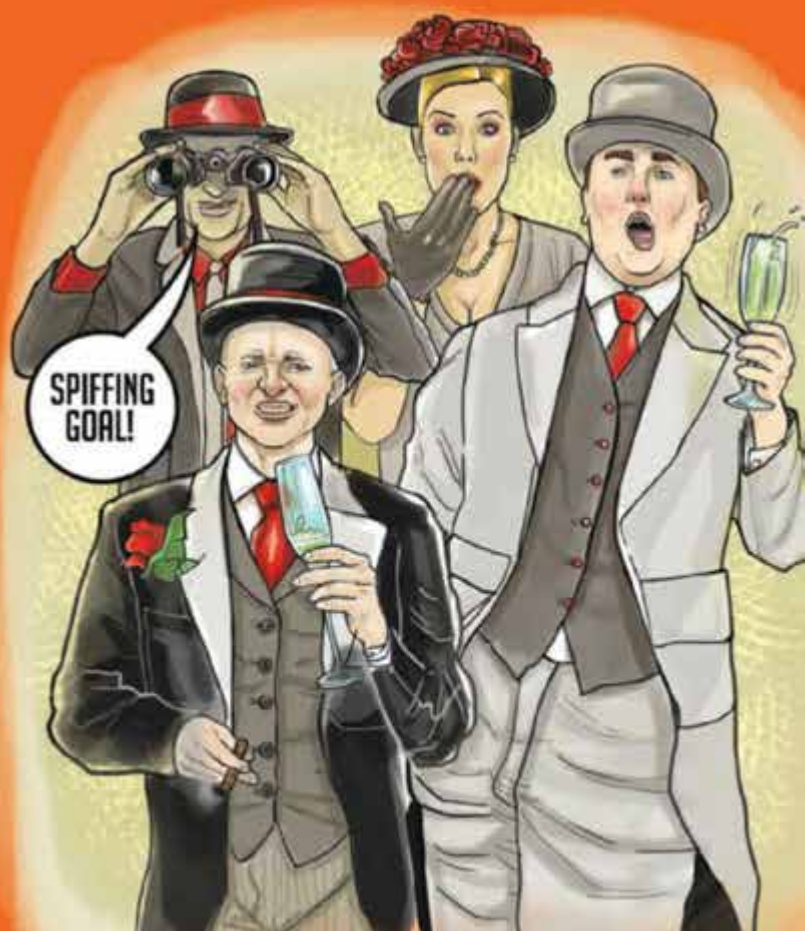
In 1888, the year the Football League was founded, one newspaper described the rise of the working-class football fan. “A few years since, football was confined to a particular class, and the games only proved of interest to the players and their friends,” wrote the *Northern Echo*. “Now, all classes are represented, and the games afford amusement to thousands of spectators throughout the country.” ▶

# GENTLEMEN PIONEERS

Association football was invented in the back room of a London pub in 1863 by several well-to-do gentlemen sporting sizeable moustaches and mutton-chop sideburns, and the original association football fans were just as gentlemanly and hairy. Early club matches became social events that allowed spectators the opportunity to show off their finest clothing – frock jackets, waistcoats and colourful neckerchiefs, with shiny top hats or billycock bowlers. Newspapers noted that the early matches were also attended by “many of the fair sex, who added to the attractions of the sport”.

These fledgling meetings between the London-based Football Association sides attracted only a few hundred supporters. Bigger and livelier crowds could be found elsewhere in emerging football hotbeds such as Glasgow and Sheffield.

One newspaper article described the gentlemen from Sheffield as “extremely liberal with their plaudits... and equally unsparing in their sarcasm and country ‘chaff’”. Dictionary definitions of ‘chaff’ include ‘light-hearted joking’ as well as the word ‘banter’, which means banter has been associated with football fans for the best part of 150 years.







# ARMCHAIR FANS

Supporters following their team's ups and downs from the comfort of their living room aren't a new phenomenon. As early as the 1920s, people gathered around their crackly radio sets for live commentaries. Early broadcasts were often hard to make out but the listeners enjoyed hearing the raucous cheers of fans and the noisy stamping of feet in the grandstands. Newspapers said that commentaries gave "a splendid idea of the atmosphere of a big soccer match".

The first televised match was aired in 1938, offering observers "as good a view of the game as would have been gained from the stands". Clubs soon began to object, arguing that the TV broadcasts would have a negative effect on gates. But it seemed unlikely that football fans in the 1930s would ever choose to stay at home rather than go to the match. One critic said: "No genuine football fan who could by any possibility reach the ground is likely to prefer his armchair."

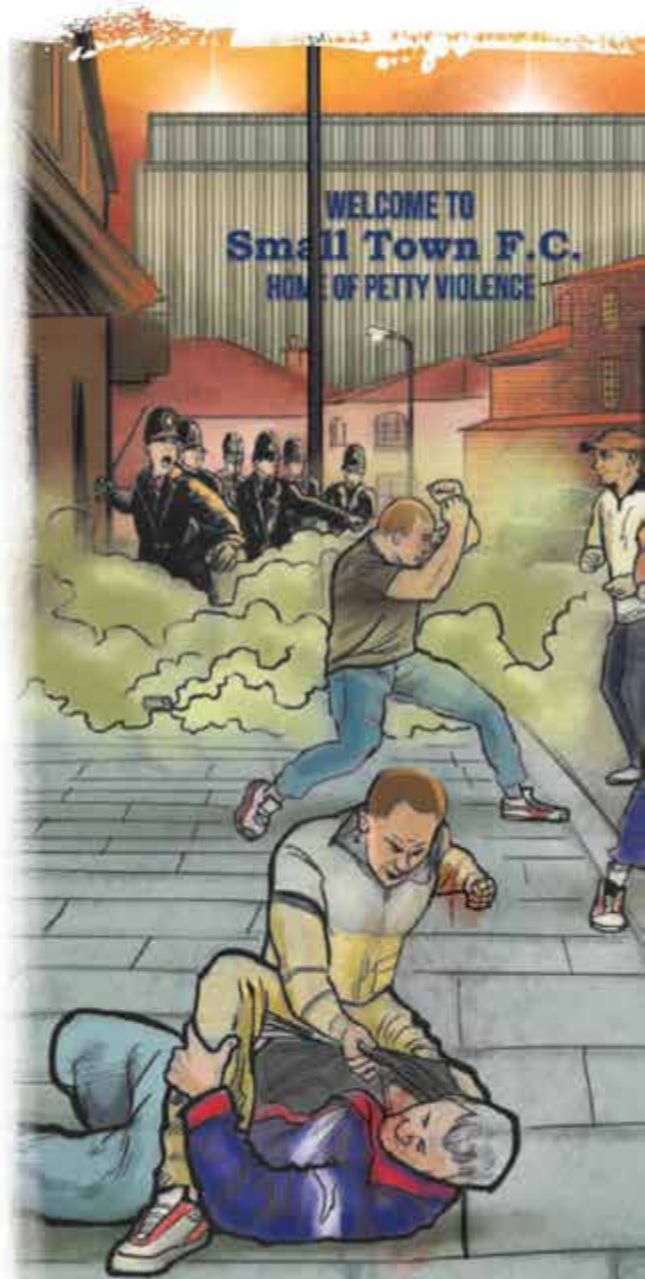
## SPRAWLING MASSES

"There must be millions of them!" exclaimed the *Daily Mail* in 1901. No, they weren't getting upset by more foreigners, but were instead attempting to get a handle on the remarkable rise in the number of football supporters around the country. This followed the then-record gate at the 1901 FA Cup Final at Crystal Palace of almost 115,000. During the match the boisterous crowd, all hats and moustaches, shouted, "Play up!", and filled the air with hoots and cheers. When a goal was scored, fans "broke out into a delirium of waving hands and handkerchiefs, of tossed hats and twirling sticks".

Growing attendances peaked in 1923 at the "White Horse Final", named after photographs and newsreel footage displayed a white police horse and its rider attempting to clear the Wembley Stadium pitch of thousands of spectators. It was the first football match to be played at Wembley and the official capacity was 125,000, although some estimates suggest that up to 300,000 fans were packed inside.

## SCARF-SWINGING RATTLERS

Although the photographs and videos we've got of them are black and white, the post-war fans of the late-1940s and 1950s were the most colourful in football history. The dark suits and overcoats that had been worn by generations of previous fans were now decorated with scarves, hats, rosettes and more football "favours" in a swarm





of club colours. They were noisy, too, swinging rattles, ringing bells and parping on trumpets. A reporter at the time described "colours flying, rattles racketing in the air, bugles blowing, klaxons hooting and even saucepan lids clashing together – anything to make a din".

Fans had been singing since the early days, lustily hollering hymns such as *Abide with Me* and more patriotic efforts including *God Save the King/Queen*. Several outfits had specific anthems which would be heartily sung before kick-off. Portsmouth fans had been singing *The Pompey Chimes* since the 1890s, while Norwich supporters had been belting out *On the Ball, City* since the early-1900s. After the pre-game sing-along, as matches got underway, the anthems would be replaced by loud choruses of cheers, boos and bellows. And during the post-war golden age, supporters began to adapt popular songs into enduring chants such as 1956 ditty *Que Sera, Sera*, which went on to become "*We're Going to Wem-ber-ley*".

Football's colourful and noisy golden age saw the attendances peak at an all-time high. The aggregate gate for Football League games in the 1948-49 campaign was more than 41.2 million. The average First Division attendance in that season was 38,792 – the highest in history and an average that has never quite been beaten, even in the era of the Premier League. The admission prices were going up as well: the Football League's minimum charge for match entry was a shilling and threepence back in 1948, but had increased to two shillings by 1955 – equivalent to about £3 today. ▶

# HORRIBLE HOOLIGANS

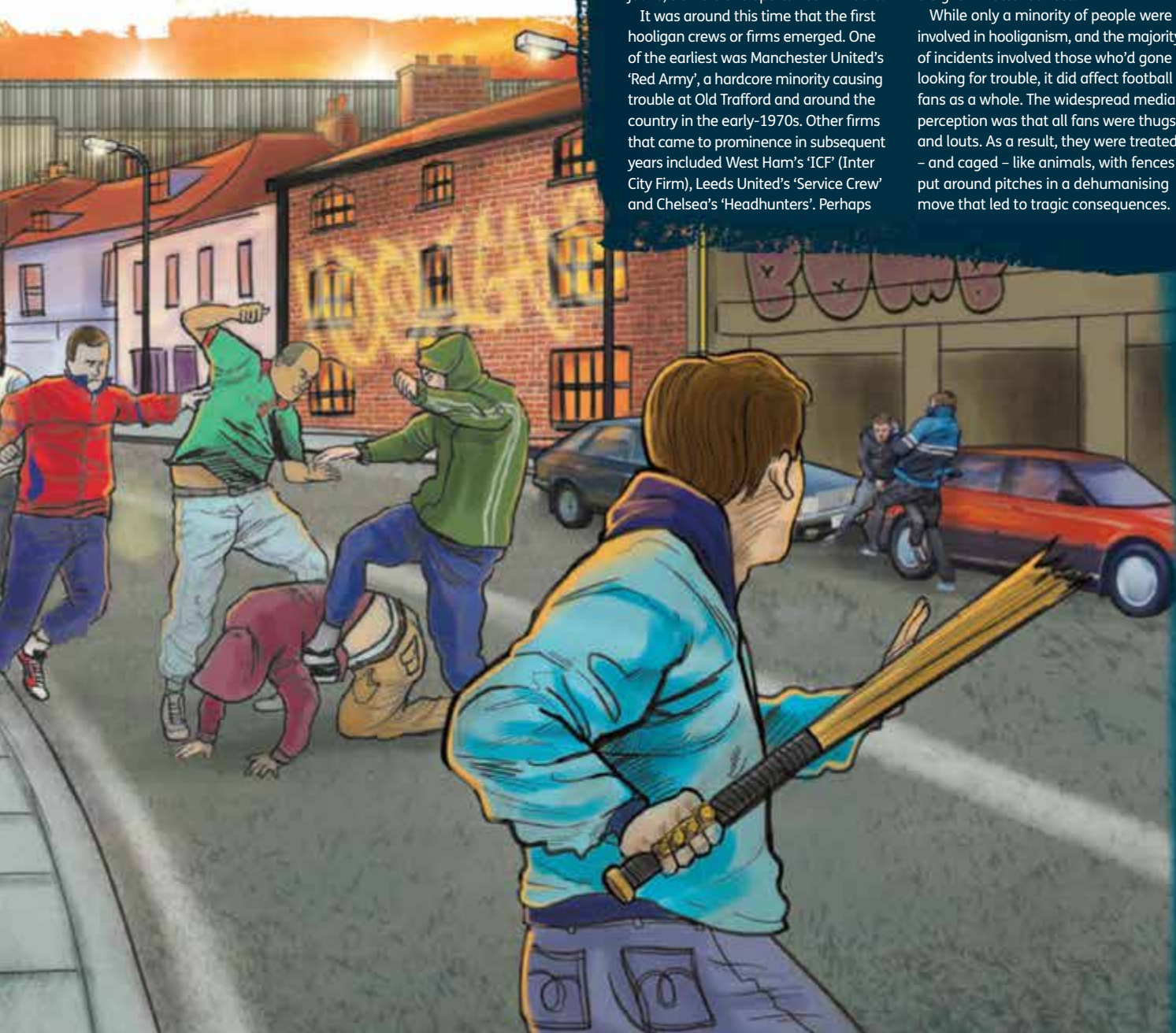
Football hooligans had existed since the Victorian era, but through to the 1960s they were generally involved in sporadic scenes of bad behaviour. By the mid-60s, fans had become more organised and identifiable, wearing club colours and chanting in favour of their teams. They had also become more mobile, going to away matches in greater numbers and arriving at the home of their opponents dressed to impress, in casual clobber of jeans, trainers and sportswear V-necks.

It was around this time that the first hooligan crews or firms emerged. One of the earliest was Manchester United's 'Red Army', a hardcore minority causing trouble at Old Trafford and around the country in the early-1970s. Other firms that came to prominence in subsequent years included West Ham's 'ICF' (Inter City Firm), Leeds United's 'Service Crew' and Chelsea's 'Headhunters'. Perhaps

the most high-profile and notorious firm was Millwall's 'F-Troop' (later called the 'Millwall Bushwhackers').

By the mid-70s it was more common to see front-page pictures of groups of fans swarming across pitches, printed underneath headlines such as "Soccer Shame". The period from 1977 to 1985 was British football's most violent and it was no surprise that the worst excesses of football hooliganism coincided with a big fall in attendances.

While only a minority of people were involved in hooliganism, and the majority of incidents involved those who'd gone looking for trouble, it did affect football fans as a whole. The widespread media perception was that all fans were thugs and louts. As a result, they were treated – and caged – like animals, with fences put around pitches in a dehumanising move that led to tragic consequences.





# FOOTBALL HIPSTERS

They moan about the excesses of modern football and obsess over expensive trainers and Andrea Pirlo, but football hipsters – in their St Pauli jerseys and Dulwich Hamlet scarves – are now consumed by the game. They have helped to shape an alternative fan culture, fuelled by fashion, music and nostalgia for football's past, and promoted it on blogs and in glossy reinventions of the fanzine. And many of them have played an active role in promoting and improving the overall fan experience.

Football hipsters have made non-league football trendy, helping raise its profile and boost attendances. They've also established European football weekends as a refreshing change to Premier League Super Sundays. Inspired by the Ultra movements in Italy, Germany and elsewhere, they have made efforts to import continental ideas, from tifo displays to safe standing sections and fan ownership of clubs. They aren't all "against modern football". And some of them don't even have beards.



## FANZINE ENTHUSIASTS



During the dark days of the '80s, many people became disillusioned with the state of the game and the way that it treated its fans. These supporters found a voice through the creating and selling of football fanzines. Almost every club in the country had a fanzine or two, all lovingly made using Letraset, Tipp-Ex and photocopiers, and flogged outside the grounds as an alternative option to the club-produced match programmes.

Humour played a vital part, and many of them had suitably irreverent names

like QPR's *A Kick Up The Rs* and Barnsley's *West Stand Bogs*, plus gloriously titled Gillingham favourite *Brian Moore's Head Looks Uncannily Like London Planetarium*.

In an era in which football fans were often marginalised, fanzines attempted to articulate supporters' views, influence authorities and change perceptions. It was in changing perceptions that they had most success. The fanzine creators helped to redefine the image of football fans, from the knuckle-dragging jobs to bright and peaceful members of society.





## FOOTBALL HIPSTERS HELPED TO SHAPE AN ALTERNATIVE FAN CULTURE, FUELLED BY FASHION, MUSIC AND NOSTALGIA

### REPLICA KIT-WEARERS

The Premier League era began in a garish rush of shiny polyester with all-seater stadiums crammed with banks of replica kit-wearing fans. Kits had actually been around since the '70s. Admiral introduced the first one – a branded Leeds United top – during the 1973–74 season, and back then the jerseys cost less than a tenner. By the 1990s they were £35, but fans still bought them and also subscribed to Sky TV as the grandest shake-up in modern football history got underway.

Replica kit fans represented a bright new and highly commercialised future. Football stadiums became safer and more comfortable, but improvements came at a cost. Ticket prices increased, from £3.50 for the cheapest First Division tickets in 1989–90 to £16 for the cheapest Premier League tickets in 1999–00 – more than four times the price. Inevitably, some fans were priced out.

The shift to all-seater grounds squeezed capacities and dampened atmospheres. The game was increasingly catering for the armchair supporter, and this move towards a more passive and less engaged spectator filtered into football arenas. Fans were now turning up at their new all-seater homes expecting a sedentary TV-type experience, and atmospheres suffered as a result.

As the traditional match-goer was replaced by a more affluent fan, the humble matchday pie was replaced by something more refined. The new breed of fans were known as the “prawn sandwich brigade”, based on a rant from Roy Keane during which the Manchester United captain criticised sections of the Old Trafford crowd. “They have a few

drinks and probably the prawn sandwiches and don't realise what's going on out on the pitch,” he slammed. “I don't think some of the people who come here can spell football, never mind understand it.”

### INTERNET MEGAFANS

They sit in back bedrooms, in coffee shops and on public transport, their faces bathed in the blue glow of electronic screens. They follow football on smartphones, tablets and laptops via streams, liveblogs and social media. They watch games, post opinions, share statistics and interact with clubs and players. They click “like” on gifs of funny own goals and gnarly injuries, and retweet memes of Sam Allardyce deciding what to have in the chippy. These are the super-generation of internet football fans.

Dial-up internet access arrived in the UK in 1992, the same year as the Premier League. Now, 25 years later, the internet has completely transformed the football fan experience. It's now entirely possible to be a football fan without going to a match and without owning a TV. Traditional match-going fans from previous eras might not recognise their modern smartphone-thumbing descendant, but internet fans are football's new normal. ♦

Paul Brown's book, *Savage Enthusiasm*, reviews the history of football fan culture and is out now





Words Chris Flanagan Photography Bryan Keane

# UP FOR THE CLUSTERF CUP

Heard the one about the Englishman who decided a Scottish cup needed clubs from Ireland, Northern Ireland and Wales? Well, *FFT* had, so we went to Sligo to find out what it's all about

**T**he rain is absolutely lashing down, and Benny the Bull is desperately sheltering beneath an umbrella as a helper forlornly tries to zip up his suit. For two or three minutes the struggle looks doomed to failure, but eventually the duel between man and bull costume is won and Benny marches off, randomly mooing at members of the public as they arrive through the turnstiles. Welcome to Sligo.

There aren't many coming through said turnstiles on this particular Saturday evening, but maybe that shouldn't be a massive surprise. *FourFourTwo* has travelled to the west coast of Ireland for possibly

one of the oddest fixtures in the recent history of the British Isles: Sligo Rovers vs Falkirk, in the second round of the Scottish Challenge Cup, a good 170 miles from Scotland. One club is battling relegation from the League of Ireland, while the other is second-bottom of the Scottish second division. They have never met before, and they may never meet again. However, Scotland's version of the Checkatrade Trophy has provided us with the obscure footballing equivalent of Floyd Mayweather vs Conor McGregor.

Not that it's deterred Falkirk's hardcore support. With more than an hour until kick-off, *FFT* wanders across the road to Mooney's Bar, ▶









where an almighty racket is going on. The Republic of Ireland's crucial World Cup qualifier against Georgia is on the big screen, but the travelling Scots are not showing a lot of interest. Instead, they're guzzling the local Guinness and bellowing *Is This The Way To Amarillo* at the top of their voices, before belting out a chant about legendary midfielder Russell Latapy.

"Thirty-five of us have come here on a coach from Falkirk," says Scott Ivory, who'll be back working at an oil refinery on Monday morning. "It took us about 11 hours to finally get here. We set off at 3am, then got a ferry from Stranraer at 7.30am, arrived into Belfast at 11am and then it was a three-hour drive from there. What time did we start drinking? About 3am..."

That is pretty clear from the glazed look in the eyes of the many travelling fans... and the match hasn't even got underway yet. Fortunately, the weather – it started raining the minute FFT arrived in Sligo and hasn't stopped since – is making the Bairs fans feel right at home. "This is a pretty sunny day for us, I should have brought my shorts!" laughs Gavin Wood.

#### "A DOG'S BREAKFAST OF HARE-BRAINED SCHEMES"

There's still an obvious question that needs answering: how on earth did this fixture ever come about in the first place? Precisely 48 hours before the Football League released controversial plans for the newly reshaped Checkatrade Trophy in the summer of 2016 – with Premier League Under-21 teams introduced to the competition to the fury of many fans of EFL sides – the SPFL announced a revamp of the Scottish Challenge Cup north of the border.

First introduced in 1990 for teams outside the Scottish top division, the tournament had often suffered from low attendances and lack of interest. The premier clubs from the Highland and Lowland Leagues were eventually brought in, and Rangers' departure from Scotland's elite handed the competition an unexpected boost for a short period: the Gers' two appearances in the final were witnessed by 20,000 fans in 2014 and then 48,000 in 2016. Prior to that, the last final to be seen by more than 10,000 was in 1993.

When Rangers secured promotion back up to the top tier a year ago, a more radical restructure of the competition was devised. Last term, all of the Scottish Premiership outfits were asked to enter an under-20 team and, unlike in England, every club said yes. The leading two sides from Wales and Northern Ireland were also invited and, encouraged by how things went in 2016-17, a further offer was extended to two clubs from the Republic of Ireland.

The whole thing was actually the brainchild of an Englishman: SPFL chief executive Neil Doncaster. "It worked really well last season," the former Norwich City CEO explains to FFT. "There was an opportunity to renew the competition by expanding the teams involved, so we approached the Northern Irish and Welsh leagues and got a very good reaction. I went over to Northern Ireland to see Crusaders play Livingston – they invited me onto the pitch and I wasn't entirely enthused by the idea because you don't always get a rousing reception from Scottish audiences. But there was applause, which perhaps reflected appreciation of Northern Irish teams being allowed to enter.

"Change is always difficult and there have been certain other competitions around the world where they've innovated and it's not been as well received as with this. I do think part of the reason is that we consulted extensively, to be sure it was what people wanted. It has given the competition a higher profile. Irn-Bru came on board as sponsors so there's a financial benefit, and broadcasters got



**"IT TOOK US 11 HOURS TO GET HERE. WE SET OFF AT 3AM, ARRIVED IN BELFAST AT 11AM AND THEN IT WAS A THREE-HOUR DRIVE. WHAT TIME DID WE START DRINKING? 3AM"**

**Top** Benny the Bull joins Sligo's pre-match photo

**Below right** The Bairs' faithful drank Mooney's dry pre- and post-match

**Far right** Rovers' ultras stand their ground after failing to hoist their flag

**Below** Sligo midfielder Daniel Kearns fends off Falkirk's Cameron Blues

Crusaders, Linfield and Welsh Premier League side Bala Town all fell at the first hurdle in last term's Scottish Challenge Cup, renamed the Irn-Bru Cup, but The New Saints made the semi-finals. Doncaster has heard of potential interest from a team on the Isle of Man in time for next season and says nothing is impossible – even introducing English clubs into the competition a little further down the line. "Who knows where this will take us, but I would not rule out further changes," he reveals. "We should stay open-minded."

Not that these changes have been universally popular. An editorial in the *Daily Record* labelled it the 'Clusterf\*\*k Cup' and described it as a 'dog's breakfast of hare-brained schemes which should have been strangled at birth'. Like in England, many supporters of lower-league sides are unimpressed with the prospect of having to face under-20 'colt' teams from the Scottish top flight.

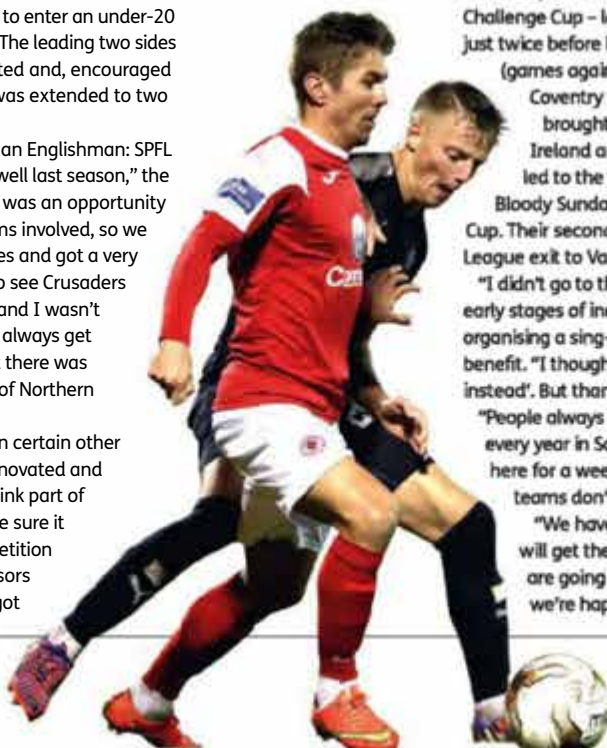
"This is a Mickey Mouse Cup," Falkirk fan Gavin Wood admits as we continue our conversation at Mooney's Bar. "You don't get any decent crowds unless it's the semi-final or the final, and introducing the colt teams hasn't really reignited it much either. But a game like this one attracts supporters who just want to go away for the weekend. I flew from Edinburgh to Knock [in County Mayo] – the flight was £240 and it's £100 for two nights in a hotel, but I'd only spend it on something else anyway. Supporting a wee team like Falkirk, there aren't too many opportunities to see them play abroad."

Indeed, the Bairs only ventured as far as Ayr during last season's Challenge Cup – losing 1-0 after extra time in the fourth round – and just twice before have they played a competitive tie outside Scotland (games against Berwick Rangers excepted). The first one was at Coventry City in 1971, in the Texaco Cup – a competition that brought together teams from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Rising political tensions led to the withdrawal of both sets of Irish sides months after Bloody Sunday, and the tournament became the Anglo-Scottish Cup. Their second came in 2009 when they made a speedy Europa League exit to Vaduz of Liechtenstein.

"I didn't go to that one," Stewart Stanfield admits ruefully – in the early stages of inebriation, he'd initially collared FFT and insisted on organising a sing-song involving everybody in the pub, purely for our benefit. "I thought: 'We'll beat this team, so I'll go to the next round instead'. But thanks for bringing it up!

"People always moan that teams play each other four or five times every year in Scotland. They've made a change and all the boys are here for a wee drink and to follow us abroad. As long as the Irish teams don't win, we'll be happy."

"We have had a rubbish start to the season but I reckon we will get the win tonight," Calum Scott predicts. "Either way, we are going to come back to this pub, rinse and repeat – drink if we're happy, drink if we're sad." ▶









**"WHEN THE DRAW WAS MADE I ASKED, 'WHERE'S SLIGO?' I HAD TO GOOGLE IT"**

We decide to head back over the road ready for kick-off. The rain continues to hammer down with the clouds obscuring what we are assured is a beautiful view of the surrounding mountains. Exposed on a hill, the wind is howling across The Showgrounds from the Atlantic Ocean, and the drop in temperature is making it seem like winter rather than the last days of summer. Optimistically, an ice cream van turns up outside the ground: FFT notices that it attracts around three punters all evening.

A town of just 19,000 people and three hours from the nearest major airport in Dublin, Sligo may have given the world Westlife but it is not a renowned tourist hotspot. If the weather isn't hospitable, however, the host team certainly are as they prepare for their first game in the Scottish Challenge Cup – and first ever competitive fixture against opponents from Great Britain.

"We pride ourselves on our links with Scotland because Brother Walfrid, the founder of Celtic, hailed from Sligo," reveals Rovers' moustachioed chairman Martin Heraghty. "We are very pleased to be in this competition. We've had some European adventures in recent years and we've always enjoyed them – we won at Rosenborg in 2014 and that was great. There's a novelty to this tie, although when we were invited we hadn't really envisaged ourselves being in a relegation dogfight right now."

Sligo's successful days at the beginning of the decade, under English bosses Paul Cook, Ian Baraclough and John Coleman, resulted in the Bit o' Red bagging the League of Ireland title and FAI Cup, but things have taken a downward turn after a fifth-placed finish last time out. That earned them a place in the Scottish Challenge Cup: Ireland's top four sides weren't considered in case any of them reached the Europa League group stage, as Dundalk and Shamrock Rovers have done in recent years. News is just filtering through that the other Irish club in the cup, last season's sixth-placed team Bray Wanderers, are out after losing their afternoon tie 2-0 at Scottish fourth-tier outfit Elgin.

The competition has gained very little publicity across Ireland – this game did not even get a mention in the 23 sports pages of the day's *Irish News* with Gaelic football and the final of the All-Ireland Hurling Championship higher on the agenda – although it has been creating intrigue in Sligo itself. "Having the fixture up on the board outside the ground, people stop and say, 'What's the story here, then? Falkirk?'" chuckles Martin McDonald. "Hopefully they will come and watch the game, but the rain may be a disincentive."

Sadly, he's right. Sligo's last home match drew more than 1,500 but as kick-off approaches tonight, the crowd remains thin. Not helped by a schedule clash with the World Cup qualifiers on TV, it reaches only 520 including 75 visitors from Scotland.

Falkirk Herald reporter David Oliver has also made the lengthy trip, huddling inside the press box for warmth. "It's been a bit of a trek," he admits. "I flew over, hired a car and drove cross country. At times I was thinking: 'Why? What am I doing driving down all these country roads to the opposite side of Ireland for a domestic match?' But this is as exotic as it gets – the only other trip I've covered was a tour to Peterhead and Fraserburgh in pre-season."

Bosses Gerard Lyttle and Peter Houston have named full-strength teams. "If we had made a better start to the season there may have been a few more youngsters in the squad, but the manager has taken the view that it's a chance to give the players confidence," explains Falkirk chief executive Craig Campbell.



**"IT NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE ME WITH SUPPORTERS, NO MATTER WHERE THE CLUB IS PLAYING. IF THERE WAS A MATCH AT THE NORTH POLE, SOME FANS WOULD STILL GO"**

**Above** No mascot, no fuss: Falkirk meant business for their Challenge Cup clash

**Right** Adebayo-Rowling had an evening to forget; meaning it was Falkirk's fans singing in the rain

Sligo's ultras appear to consist of around 15 blokes with their 'Forza Rovers' banner, although a few hardy individuals are braving the rain in the open stand behind one goal, in an over-ambitious attempt to pin a huge Irish tricolour flag to a wall in the middle of a howling gale. They settle for laying it across some seats.

What we don't know is quite how two teams from two completely different leagues will compare, but Falkirk are ahead inside only nine minutes. Sligo centre-half Seamus Sharkey slips on the sodden turf and does his best Miranda Hart impression – his comical fall allowing Rory Loy to tee up a Nathan Austin tap-in.

Benny the Bull is already looking a bit disconsolate (and wet) as he trudges around behind the goal but Sharkey quickly redeems himself, powering in a header from a corner that is greeted by a roar from the home crowd that's short in numbers but not enthusiasm. The goal is welcomed by Thin Lizzy's *The Boys Are Back In Town* but Sligo are not back in it for very long. Just before the half-hour mark, James Craigen (below left) smashes Falkirk 2-1 up from 20 yards. Cue hugs of delight among the away fans – it doesn't feel like a Mickey Mouse Cup now.

Frustration starts to get the better of some of the Sligo supporters as English full-back Tobi Adebayo-Rowling turns backwards and loses possession. "Ah for heaven's sake, now look where ya are, ya f\*\*king eejit!" one shouts (no, seriously).

Soon it's half-time and FFT says a brief hello to Fran Gavin, the FAI's director of competitions who has travelled to Sligo tonight for the match. "It is being played in a nice atmosphere," he says. "Falkirk's fans have travelled – it never ceases to amaze me with supporters, no matter where the club is playing. If they went to the North Pole, some fans would still go."

Sligo is beginning to feel ever more like the North Pole. "It's f\*\*king freezing," one Falkirk fan shivers as we join the raucous and largely half-cut visiting support for the second 45 minutes. "We've won it four times..." they sing, referencing the fact they have lifted the Scottish Challenge Cup more often than anyone else, most recently in 2012.

The home side attempt to rescue the game by throwing on their Swiss forward Benny Igiehon, a man who can only be described as an absolute unit. He causes a fair bit of mayhem but the closest the hosts come to finding an equaliser is when midfielder Rhys McCabe's punt from inside his own half catches the wind and needs a fingertip save from Falkirk keeper Robbie Thomson.

"I thought we held our own and I don't think we have let too many people down tonight," Sligo's manager Lyttle tells FFT after the final whistle is blown, which is greeted by cheers and a few twirling scarves from the victorious travelling supporters.





"It was a competitive match," concurs Falkirk's former Chelsea and Hibernian midfielder Tom Taiwo – a former Johnstone's Paint Trophy winner with Carlisle and more than content to have taken part in this curious fixture. "As long as teams aren't getting beaten 6-0 or 7-0, to me it doesn't matter who the opponents are. For our supporters to come this far to cheer us on means a lot to the players, and we are delighted to send them all home happy."

#### **"WALES? WE'D TRAVEL TO AUSTRALIA!"**

Happy they undoubtedly are as *FFT* ends the night back at Mooney's Bar, where the voyagers have now reunited for part two of the day's drinking. The Scottish Challenge Cup may not be the world's premier competition, but it has given the Falkirk supporters an away trip they will remember... just. "The drink will blur it!" Jamie Cairns grins, totting up his tally for the day. "I reckon we're up to 13 or 14 pints. It's been a good laugh. If we get a Welsh team next are you coming with us? TNS are through, The New South Wales? No, The New Saints, that's it. We'd still take a bus to Australia though!"

As it turns out, Falkirk's adventures are on hold for the time being, the draw for the last 16 a couple of days later handing them a home game with Dunfermline. TNS host Elgin, a match that will actually be played in England with the Welsh club's ground just across the border in Oswestry. Northern Irish duo Linfield and Crusaders also march on – the latter overcame Motherwell's Under-20s 3-2 in Belfast, which completed a wipeout of the colt teams.

It's wipeout for the sides from the Republic of Ireland as well: like Conor McGregor, against unfamiliar opposition they gave it their all but it wasn't quite enough. Whether they will be back next year, and whether this curious competition will provide long-term success or merely fleeting novelty, only time will tell. 🍷





# NO SERIOUSLY, WHAT IS EXPECTED GOALS?

You've seen it on Twitter, been confused by it on blogs and enraged by it on *Match of the Day* – but how does expected goals work, is it really changing football and why does it make pundits so angry?!

Words James Maw

**B**ayern Munich probably had good reason to rue their luck after bowing out in the semi-finals of the 2015-16 Champions League against Atletico Madrid – they had lost by the finest of margins.

Pep Guardiola's side, having been beaten 1-0 in the first leg, knew they had to win the return clash in Bavaria by two clear goals. The hosts unleashed an almighty siege on the Rojiblanco's goal – 33 shots to Atleti's seven, 11 of which hit the target to the visitors' four. Yet, most tellingly, they scored two goals to their opponents' one and were unceremoniously dumped out on the away goals rule.

The above statistics alone hinted Diego Simeone's men might have been a touch fortunate, but a more

qualitative measure suggested that their progression actually bordered on the miraculous.

The next day, speaking on American sports network ESPN, Italian journalist Gabriele Marcotti mentioned in passing that, on another night, the Bundesliga giants would have achieved the result they required to reach the final – after all, their expected goals rating for the two-legged tie was 4.2 to Atleti's 1.7.

"You are talking to me about expected goals in the Champions League semi-final they've just lost? What an absolute load of nonsense," came the incredulous reply from pundit Craig Burley, the former Chelsea and Scotland midfielder clearly not too impressed with the writer's use of the increasingly popular analytical tool. ▶







"I expect things at Christmas from Santa Claus, but they don't come, right? What I deal in is facts!"

Before Marcotti could calmly expand on the finer points of expected goals – or xG, as it's also known – the agitated Scotsman let rip again.

"Look at the results! That's what the game is all about. Whether [or not] you or I or anybody likes it, the game is about results. That is why managers get the sack – not all this nonsense about expected goals!"

As video of the heated exchange went viral, Burley posted on Twitter: "Seems I've upset the nerds."

Marcotti, and football's burgeoning analytics community then took a deep breath – funnily enough, this was exactly the kind of reaction they had now come to expect.



To the uninitiated, expected goals can appear like little more than an overwhelmingly complex equation. However, when you break it down, the very essence of the idea is one fans, pundits and managers have been sidestepping for decades.

"The reason I like expected goals is that it's quite intuitive when you try to strip the math out," says the writer and analytics expert Michael Caley, who has been exploring expected goals for a number of years. He has shared his discoveries in written articles and social media posts that have helped popularise xG among number-crunching supporters and journalists. "Basically, it's the idea of trying to evaluate the quality of scoring chances," he explains. "When a pundit on television claims a team was a bit unlucky and that they could have won a game, what they're trying to say is that the team created better scoring chances, but the goals just didn't come."

It may have only started appearing on *Match of the Day* this season (more on that later), but xG has been around for more than five years and continues to be constantly refined as more matches are played.

"Opta first came up with the concept of expected goals when one of our data scientists – Sam Green, who has since gone on to work at a Premier League club – devised an analytical model based on similar things being done in American sport," says Duncan Alexander, Opta's head of data editorial. "Once the theory existed, various people in the analytics community worked on and adjusted it – making a few little tweaks to the model to try to perfect it. So there are actually several different xG models in existence, but there is only really a very slight difference with the numbers."

Among those to have tweaked the xG model is Caley, who originally began toying with football analytics in his spare time while studying for a PhD in the History of Religion at Harvard University. He's therefore well placed to explain, in layman's terms, how the whole thing works.

"Expected goals uses a whole bunch of indicators based on Opta's on-ball event data – where on the pitch the shot had been taken from, what part of the body was used, the type of pass that had set up the chance, how quickly the move progressed down the pitch before the shot, the proximity of the opposition players, and so on – to determine exactly how likely it is that a particular opportunity will result in a goal.

"For example, if it's a cross onto a player's head, that's going to have lower expected goals because those are more difficult to score from. If it's a through-ball to feet, which is going to eliminate a number of defenders, that's going to increase the chances of a goal. And if it is a corner-kick, there'll be a load of defenders in the box so you're less likely to score. You essentially pull all of that into one math equation that then spits out a number – expected goals – which can be tallied up over the course of a game, or a season and for a player or a team."

Crystal Palace's xG for their 1-0 defeat at Burnley in September, that ultimately cost Frank de Boer his briefly held job, was 1.74. Over the course of the 90 minutes, they spurned several presentable chances that on another day they would have buried. Burnley's xG in the same match was a mere 0.43. The Clarets were evidently far more clinical.



At this stage, it is also worth making a key distinction – that between statistics and analytics. "The thing that really irks me when I hear it is the word 'stats'," says Billy Beane – a man who certainly speaks with authority. Beane, as many readers will be aware, was at the heart of



#### Clockwise from top

The Eagles were unlucky at Burnley, according to xG figures; the analysts predicted Juve's revival during 2015-16; Beane, who led the revolution in baseball analytics, feels a similar approach could help football scouts, too

the data revolution in baseball during his time as general manager of the Oakland A's. His use of sabermetrics ("the use of objective data – what we would now call analytics – and mathematically finding a more efficient way of putting together a baseball team") allowed the A's to go toe-to-toe with Major League Baseball's richest franchises, despite their own financial limitations. His tale was told in the book *Moneyball* and the 2011 movie of the same name. He's also a huge football fan.

"Stats are results," Beane tells *FFT*. "You can have the same outcome, such as a goal, from two different events but both of them can be very different in terms of how difficult they were. Take a [Lionel] Messi goal, where he has weaved through nine guys, versus a tap-in. Those goals are the same statistically, but they require two different skill sets – one was harder to score than the other."

Expected goals may now be starting to appear in more post-match analysis alongside shots on target and the number of corners, but it doesn't really belong in the same company. While statistics will tell you what has just happened, analytics is able to give you a much clearer idea of what could be yet to come.

"A good example I cite is Juventus in 2015-16," explains Alexander. "After 10 league matches they had only won three times, but over the 10 games they had scored far fewer goals than you'd expect them to have done based on the quality of their chances, and conceded more based on the quality of chances their opponents were creating. Their results had been much worse than their performances had suggested."

"The Turin side had scored 11 goals in those 10 games, when their xG was 19. At the other end, they had leaked nine, when expected goals suggested it would usually have been five. Looking at those numbers, we expected things to regress to normal and, lo and behold, the Old Lady's luck changed. In fact, they won their next 15 Serie A matches on the way to winning another title."



# CRYSTAL PALACE'S xG IN THE 1-0 DEFEAT AT BURNLEY THAT COST FRANK DE BOER HIS JOB WAS 1.74, WHILE THE CLARETS' xG IN THE SAME GAME WAS A MERE 0.43

The same method can be implemented to xG figures for an individual player. For example, a largely overlooked centre-forward who has not found the net too often may be about to start scoring for fun – and xG could help you see it coming.

“Harry Kane has consistently scored above his xG for the last three seasons,” says Alexander. “You are never going to sign a young striker on the basis of one season of similar numbers to Harry Kane, although these numbers will help you to spot players who, for whatever reason – be it some poor team-mates or a particularly rotten spell of luck – may be going under the radar.”

Ironically, Caley – a Spurs fan – was able to use the model to predict Kane’s rise to goalscoring greatness before he had even achieved the status of ‘one-season wonder’.

“I wrote an article about Kane’s shot production before he’d earned a regular place in the Tottenham line-up,” Caley tells *FFT*. “It outlined that, in the limited minutes he was getting for Spurs, as well as while out on loan, he had been putting up the type of numbers that looked like those of an elite forward.”

Kane’s numbers during the final months of the 2013-14 campaign – when Tim Sherwood was still in charge at White Hart Lane – were, as Caley says, “through the roof”.

It’s not inconceivable that, had a shrewd Premier League rival taken note of the statistics, been a little bit bolder and made an offer for the Tottenham rookie in the summer of 2014, when he was still very much on the fringes in N17, perhaps he would have recently netted his 100th goal in their colours instead.

But English football hasn’t always welcomed change with open arms. Just as foreign managers of the ‘90s were met with some bewildered gawps when they dared suggest downing pints and gorging on steak and chips may not be the perfect preparation for elite-level athletes, those who have more recently attempted to utilise analytical models to evaluate the game have been met with, at best, a mixed response.

Poor old Gab Marcotti certainly isn’t the first person to cite analytical data in assessing a sporting fixture, only to then be immediately shot down by sceptical naysayers.

“We were not interested in convincing people – frankly it was to our advantage that no one was convinced,” Beane admits to *FFT*, speaking of his early work in baseball.

Despite it becoming increasingly clear that analytics has got plenty to offer, there are still doubters. When xG was made a part of *Match of the Day*’s graphics from the start of this Premier League campaign, suddenly it was mainstream.

Within minutes of its first appearance on screen, social media was instantly awash with mentions of ‘hipsters and stat nerds’, demands for the BBC to ‘get in the sea’ and endless assertions that the numbers are ‘pointless’ and ‘bollocks’.

This was precisely why, as *Match of the Day*’s editor Richard Hughes explains, the programme always planned for the inclusion of expected goals to not be too intrusive.

“*Match of the Day* attracts a lot of debate on Twitter and something new like expected goals will always divide opinion – that is why we’ve deliberately made it a pretty low-key introduction,” Hughes tells *FFT*.

“It is there for people who know about xG already and are keen to see it, but it’s not detracting from the experience of those who don’t.

“We’ve worked very closely with Opta over the past few seasons to integrate a lot more data into the show, and this seemed like a natural progression – something new and innovative. We have had more and more data on screen – not necessarily things that have been spoken about by the pundits, but rather support the visuals that have backed up the points they are making.”

Opta’s Alexander concurs that analytical models such as xG won’t ever replace living, breathing scouts or pundits, but merely aid them.

“We’ve never been zealots,” he says. “We’ve never demanded that people use our data or claimed this stuff is going to replace humans. Expected goals is going to help football clubs make decisions and help pundits illustrate their point. It’s not going to replace the human eye.

“Ultimately, what all these models should do is throw up a little bit of insight and then help people to form cogent arguments,” he adds.

“I would be lying if I said the pundits weren’t a tad sceptical in terms of the value it brings,” admits Hughes. “Gary Lineker, Ian Wright and Alan Shearer know quite a lot about scoring goals, and there have been variables in the model that they’ve questioned when we’ve discussed it – in particular, things such as defensive positioning and long-shot chances. The key for them is always which player has taken the shot.”

So the strikers’ union will always have their say on the performances of their brethren – regardless of the rise of xG – but what about other areas of the pitch? Will we end up having some similar conversations about defensive contributions?

“Events on the ball are what we all focus on, but there are so many other things going on that will impact what happens next,” explains Beane. “There are things that happen on a football field that aren’t being measured, so players don’t get the credit for them. For example, a defensive player, who by virtue of his ability is able to get himself into a position to alter a shot, will completely change the dynamic of the play despite never touching the ball. Eventually, that is the kind of thing you want to measure.”

The good news for Beane and the world’s best centre-backs is that an analytical way of assessing defensive contribution is in the pipeline.

“Expected goals is the first model and the one that has received the most coverage, but it’s the first in a series of hopefully quite a few we will be using,” says Alexander.

“We’re also now working with ‘expected assists’, which is similar to xG, and ‘sequences’ from which you derive a team’s style of play and the pace at which they attack.

“And we’re also working on something called ‘defensive coverage’, which could be big for us because the criticism of Opta event data – and a reasonably valid one – has been that it’s a lot harder to assess defending than it is attacking.”

Defensive coverage can measure the area of defensive responsibility implied by a player’s defensive actions throughout a match – tackles, blocks, interceptions, clearances etc. So Chelsea’s all-action midfield lunatic N’Golo Kanté, for instance, may cover a large area of the pitch, while a full-back in a team that’s being dominated by the opposition will likely have a smaller area.

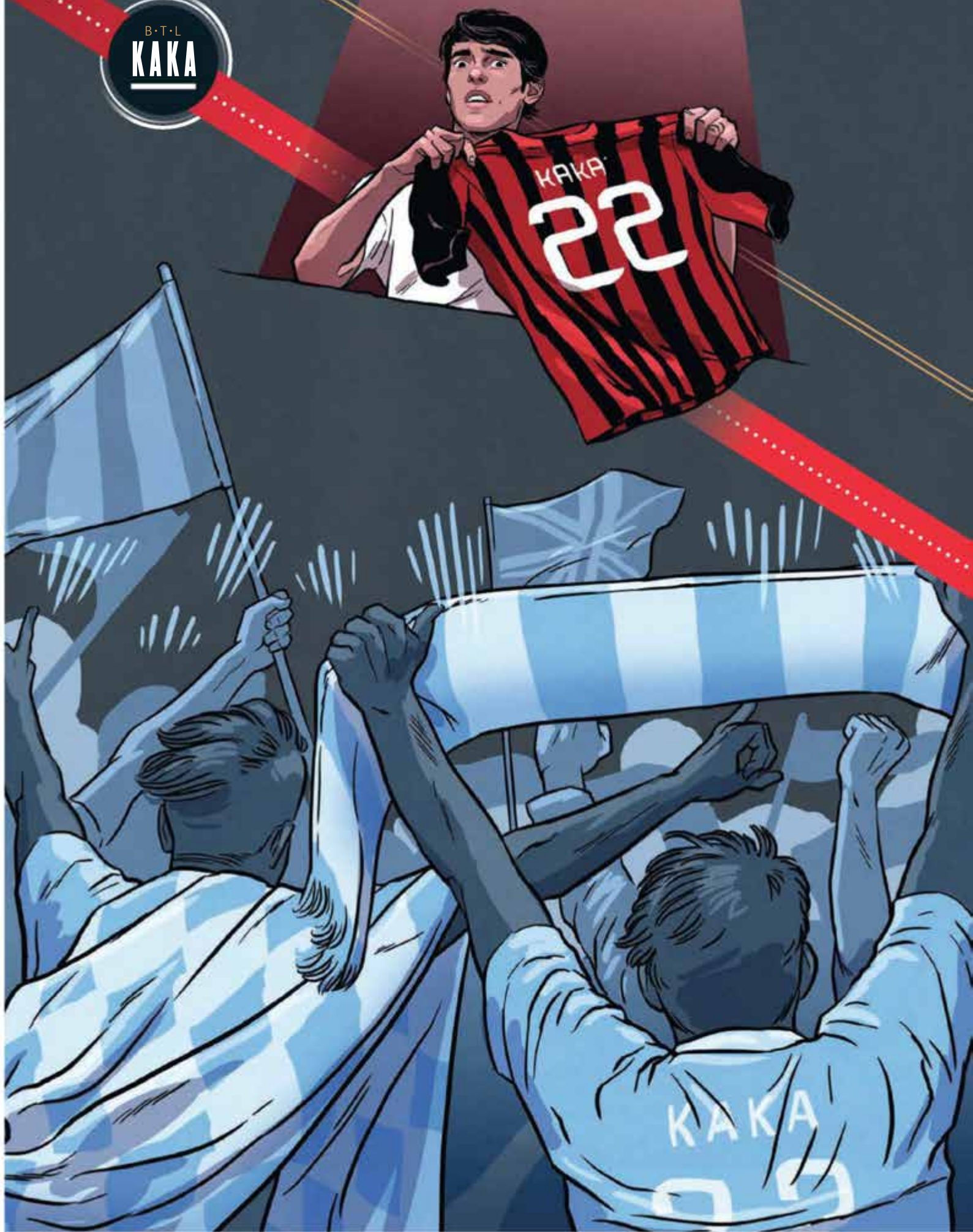
“A good example of that from last season was when Ander Herrera marked Eden Hazard out of the game [between Manchester United and Chelsea] at Old Trafford in April,” says Alexander. “He’s nominally a central midfielder, but the Spaniard’s ‘defensive zone’ was a rough parallelogram on the edge of the right-hand side of United’s box. He was tasked with stopping Hazard, who ultimately didn’t have a single touch inside the penalty area.

“Any pundit who watched that match would certainly have spotted that Herrera performed very well, but up until now there hasn’t really been a way of illustrating that.”

That may not be music to the ears of Craig Burley, half of Twitter and anyone else who’d rather stick their fingers in their ears and pretend football’s ‘data revolution’ isn’t actually happening. But as Billy Beane puts it, “the genie’s out of the bottle now, and it’s not going back in”.



B.T.L  
**KAKA**





# “I HAD NO IDEA MAN CITY WANTED TO SIGN ME.”

Interview Felipe Rocha

Illustration David Buisan

# THE SITUATION REALLY MESSED ME UP!

Kaka's proposed £100m move from Milan to Man City was set to be one of the most sensational transfers ever until it all fell through at the last minute – he reveals what *really* happened





was sat at home when the telephone rang – I can still remember it clearly. It was my father and he seemed nervously excited. Then he told me a team in England, Manchester City, had made Milan a huge offer for me. Before I could even react, he added that Milan were prepared to accept the bid.

I'd had absolutely no idea that Manchester City were

interested in signing me until they'd actually made their official offer to Milan. The process had been really different to how these things often work. City did not talk to my father – who also acted as my agent – first. They had gone straight to Milan and made their intention clear. Very clear in fact. They made Milan an offer for me, then sat back and asked, 'What do you think?'

Milan's directors then called my dad and explained to him what had happened. At that time, Milan were not the kind of club you expected to sell its best players. Their philosophy was to sell only those players who really wanted to leave the club, and I wasn't a player who really wanted to leave the club. However, when Adriano Galliani, the club's vice-chairman, spoke to my father, he told him: 'You know, for the first time, we are actually keen to do this deal – it is a huge amount of money and we will accept their offer.' I didn't know what to think.

• • •

I have always had a really close relationship with my father and we talk openly about pretty much everything. Together, we came to the conclusion that we should consider moving to England. We thought that if Milan were willing to negotiate with another club, something that was very rare, then we should seriously consider our options. It looked like a new, exciting challenge and a new chapter for me, but it had all come out of nowhere, and very quickly. Soon I started to feel confused and anxious. The situation messed me up.

I was quite agitated and emotionally shaken. I remember playing in a home game against Fiorentina at the San Siro right in the middle of the negotiation period, and the whole situation being on my mind during the game. I couldn't focus at all and my performance on the pitch was bad because of that. I can remember the Milan supporters screaming at me, 'Don't sell yourself, Kaka. Don't sell yourself, Kaka.'







## “ONCE WE HEARD MILAN WERE HAPPY WITH CITY’S OFFER WE WERE VERY INTRIGUED TO HEAR WHAT THIS PROJECT WAS ALL ABOUT”

That was a really difficult match for me on an emotional level, and it summed up how much I was struggling throughout that period – it was anything but easy. The negotiations impacted a lot on my mood and my life as well. Which way should I go? Should I move abroad to Manchester and start an exciting new adventure in another country, or should I stay at Milan, the club I loved? It was more complicated because there were many different things to consider – so I reached out to a few people for advice.

In particular, I shared all of my thoughts and anxieties about this unexpected scenario with Galliani and Leonardo, who was Milan’s technical director back then. They were the two guys at the club with whom I talked about it most.

Of course, my family was very important, as always, in supporting me and keeping me in the right frame of mind to make such a big choice. I talked about it with Caroline, who was my wife at the time. We discussed the subject over and over for days on end. My parents and brother also knew what was going on and they played a key role in me coming to my decision.

### Clockwise from above

His decision to remain in Milan sparked Kaka Mania down on the streets and up in the stands; looking to the heavens after the 2007 Champions League Final triumph in Athens

I can’t deny that I hadn’t expected to be living through this kind of situation. I was massively surprised by City’s offer, especially as it had come during the January transfer window when it is far less common for big transfers to take place. If it had happened during the summer, when we have proper holidays and there’s time for the finer details to be ironed out, perhaps it would have proved an easier thing to have dealt with and my choice would have been clearer. I would have had more time to think away from the club and the city – and, of course, it would not have been happening right in the middle of the season.

But the bid came in January, and once we’d heard from Milan that they were happy with Manchester City’s bid, my staff and I were free to negotiate the personal terms of the deal. We were very intrigued to hear exactly what this project was all about. My father travelled over to England to meet with City’s manager, Mark Hughes, and some of the club’s directors a few times.

Carlo Ancelotti was the manager of Milan. He was obviously aware of what was going on with me, but he never said anything that could be seen as an attempt to persuade me one way or the other. He never suggested I should stay or leave the club – he would just come and politely ask how I was feeling, whether things were going well and whether I needed any help or guidance – those kind of things. Carlo showed he had the compassion and personality to not only help me deal with such emotions, but at the same time control the situation in order to ensure it wouldn’t affect the team. In football, the team is always the priority – it has to be, and this is something I have always understood well and respected.

• • •

It’s important to make clear that I was feeling very settled in Italy back then. I was happy, completely happy, not only at the club but also in the city and the country. I had been there for nearly six years and I felt really at home in my surroundings. My time in Italy was great in every sense – on the football pitch and in my personal life. I honestly wasn’t thinking of going anywhere else. The club, the city, the country, its people – there wasn’t a single problem with my life. ▶



People will naturally read that and wonder: 'So why even consider moving to England?' The answer is simply because Milan accepted an offer for me. When that happens, it changes everything. If Milan had rejected that bid, it would have been the end of the matter. And if the club had released a statement saying something along the lines of: 'Kaka is not for sale. No money in the world would convince us to sell him,' then it would have been all over and there would be no room for speculation. I would never have stormed into the Milan boardroom to demand a transfer. I wouldn't even have politely asked them to let me go. No chance. I was fine. I was happy.

But if your own club is saying, 'Why not?' then your thinking starts to change. And that's exactly what happened with me. Hearing that Milan were prepared to sell me obviously made me contemplate my future there. Even if my relationship with the club and the fans had always been great, they were saying that I could go, weren't they? It was a pretty clear indication that perhaps my time there had come to an end. After six years, it's only natural for these things to happen.

The only thing I was sure about was that the timing of the situation was bad for all parties. For clubs, it is not the best time to sign or sell a player in January. For a player, it's also far from ideal changing clubs then, especially in this fashion – moving to a very different league in another country with a new language and culture. Being a part of an ambitious project that the whole football world was talking about was intriguing, but it wasn't ideal in January.

I can't say I knew too much about Manchester City at that time, to be honest. I only really knew the basic information about the club. I was aware of Sheikh Mansour's takeover of the club and had been told of his intentions to re-build the entire team and buy the best players in the world. A few months earlier they had bought Robinho. From that point, I obviously knew City were becoming a big club in England and I watched several of their games on TV.

At that stage, Manchester City were not the Manchester City we all know today. They were still at the beginning of this journey towards becoming one of the best and most powerful clubs in world football. The project of building a squad capable of fighting for the big trophies both in England and in Europe had yet to fully develop. I was one of the first players they wanted to sign in order to establish their name. From my own perspective, it was something I considered particularly flattering, but I was still very uncertain.

**Right** The Ultras' protests eventually convinced the Brazilian to snub a move to England **Below right** His double at Old Trafford helped the Rossoneri oust Man United in the 2006-07 Champions League semis **Bottom** "Ah, so you heard about City's offer, then..."

Those discussions with City were crucial because we were keen to understand the exact details of their offer, and we wanted to make sure all of the details of this special project were clear to everyone. How exactly were they intending to put their very ambitious plan of becoming one of the world's best football clubs into action? Who else was taking part in the project? Which other players were interested in joining the squad? What were the short- and long-term targets?

The negotiations between City and I went very far indeed. It came to the point where all of the numbers and the finer details had been discussed. The offer was on the table. The only thing separating City and I was my final word. The wages I had been offered were much, much higher than what I was earning with Milan. In moments like those, you begin to picture how your future will look. It's only natural. I found myself wondering what my life playing in England would be like, what my routine at this new club would be, how difficult it would be for my kids and my wife to move home. All of these thoughts were swirling around inside my head. I prayed many times during this period.







## "DAD," I SAID FIRMLY. "YOU CAN TELL THEM I'M NOT GOING FOR NOW. MY DECISION IS TO STAY WITH MILAN. THAT'S MY FINAL CALL"

Praying has always been something that has helped me find the right balance in my life. And, most importantly, find peace in my decisions.

In the final stages of the negotiations, my phone rang. Once again I was at home in Milan and, again, it was my father on the other end of the line. He was in yet another meeting with City's representatives. At the same time, just outside of my window, there were hundreds of Milan supporters gathered in the street near my building. They realised it was time for the last ruling and they had come to tell me it was also a massive decision for them as well. It was just one of several displays of affection they showed me throughout the negotiation period with City.

Milan's fans loved me. They still love me, and it's mutual as I love them very much. I can't honestly say that if they had not been there in front of my apartment my decision would have been any different, but it was still such an incredible feeling to witness the depth of their affection at that particular moment. It was nice to understand how much they cared about me and how much they wanted to continue our adventure together. They played a big part, they helped me. The fans were everywhere in the street, singing. I was on the phone with my dad. He explained to me the final breakdown of the contract that City were offering me. That was it. 'There's nowhere to run any more,' he said. 'It's up to you now.'



'Dad,' I said firmly. 'You can tell them that I am not going for now. Tell them we'll see what happens in the future. My decision is to stay with Milan. That's my final call.'

I had finally come to the conclusion that it was not quite the right time for me to go to City, and the main reason was the uncertainty over the squad-building process that they were about to undertake. It wasn't clear to me how the squad would be reshaped and I wasn't too convinced it would work.

Nowadays, Manchester City is a much more solid club, so it would be an easier decision if I had to make it today. Anyone who receives an offer from them now won't suffer from the same headaches that I experienced nearly a decade ago. To put it simply, if my negotiations with them had taken place this year, my decision would have been very different, that's for sure.

Unfortunately, things were different back then. I was being asked to swap one of the most historical and successful clubs in Europe for a team who were only at the beginning of a completely new project, where I was supposed to be the first big player. Looking back, it was safer to stay at Milan, one of the leading clubs in Europe and a club regularly competing to win the Champions League – a place where I had become one of the key figures and was very much respected.

People always ask me about that famous scene where I leant out of the window of my home, happily waving my Milan shirt for all of the supporters down below to see. This was something I decided to do instinctively. It was a reaction to everything that had happened – to the confusion and pressure which I had suffered. After telling my father that I wasn't going anywhere, the next step was making Milan aware of my final decision. The club, through its press officers, immediately made an official statement. Media outlets soon began running the story, and it wasn't long before the news reached the crowd gathered at the ground floor of my building. I could hear the fans celebrating, screaming and singing. I took my Milan shirt and joined the supporters in celebrating. They sang and danced for ages – there were even flares and smoke bombs. It was a wild celebration and I'd never seen anything quite like it. Half an hour later, Leonardo arrived at my house. We spent the rest of the evening chatting about the process and my decision.

...

I don't regret my decision at all. Obviously everybody gets decisions wrong, but some people will spend an eternity discussing a decision without ever coming to a conclusion on whether to do one thing or the other. I'm pleased with the way my life and career have panned out since that moment. I'm happy with the person I am now – both professionally and personally – and my decisions in life have helped to shape the person I am. I'm proud of what I've learned in Italy, in Spain and nowadays here in America at Orlando City, as well as all the other chapters in my life. Every moment was important to me ending up where I am today.

When I finally left Milan a few months later, I went to Real Madrid to make my dream come true. That was one thing that had always been quite clear in my head: if I had to go to another club after Milan, it would be Real Madrid. But life has its own ways and at that moment the offer came from Manchester City. I guess my decision to deny City's offer is proof that the money was never a priority in my decisions. After saying no to City, I knew other offers would come in June and July. Milan had opened the door to a move and I started considering it, too. I had it clear in my head that if Real Madrid showed any interest in me the following summer, I would love to play for them.

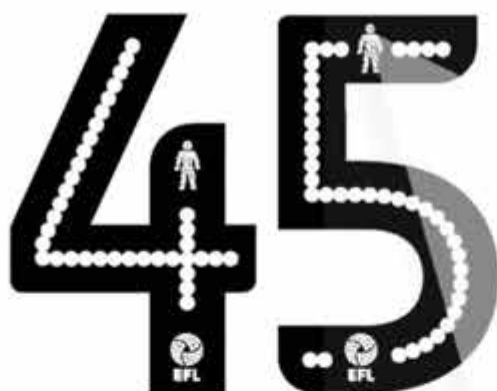
Looking back, I have no doubt that playing in the Premier League would have been a fantastic experience. I'm 35 years old now and it's easy to say at this moment. I already know what has happened in my career and the consequences of my choices. Saying it doesn't mean I regret any decision. Not at all. I'm proud of my career, but if I could have planned everything I would have considered playing in English football at some point.

You have to be calm and find peace in your decisions. And, at that moment, I found the peace in saying no to Manchester City. 'I don't want to go, but thank you.'



# WHO'S THE MAN?

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# ACTION REPLAY

Action Replay editor Andrew Murray



Keegan and Bremner go to war at Wembley **p100**

When Brighton hitched a lift in a helicopter **p92** | Bizarre history of... Queen's Park **p95**

THE STORY  
BEHIND  
THE SHOT

## BOBBY'S HAT TRICK

It's no coincidence that you'll never find a picture of Bobby Moore with even a single hair out of place. "The jumpers in his wardrobe were hung in sequence from dark colours to light," his first wife Tina once said. Teaming up with namesake Graham of Chelsea (left) and Charlton's Eddie Firmani (right) for a 1963 photo shoot, the World Cup-winning captain – whose keen following of fashion extended to owning a leather coats business – cut quite the dash.







# THE SEAGULLS HAVE LANDED

With Brighton now a Premier League club, *FFT* revisits Albion's last game as a top-flight side in 1983 and the unconventional transport they used

**I**t's May 1983 and 12 men wearing matching white suits are walking across a school playing field and climbing into a waiting helicopter.

They are the first-team players of just-relegated Brighton & Hove Albion and are en route to face the might of Manchester United in the FA Cup final.

The previous evening, they stayed at the well-appointed Selsdon Park Hotel close to Croydon, also the base camp for surprise cup kings Sunderland and Southampton in '73 and '76. However, Brighton won't be following their route to Wembley via the A23. The Seagulls are taking to the skies.

Much like their return to the top flight 34 years later, Brighton didn't do things the obvious way. Wimbledon might back their own FA Cup final outing five years





later in '88, but Albion were the original Crazy Gang.

This was a raggle-taggle collection of promising youngsters and – in the case of Jimmy Case, Gordon Smith and Tony Grealish – been-around-the-block pros. Case had visited Wembley a few times before, even scoring in the 1977 final for Liverpool, also against United. Grealish (below, left) had graced the pitch too, playing Gaelic football for London side St Gabriels.

Forty-five-year-old Jimmy Melia, the follicly-challenged Scouser who'd only graduated to the manager's office the previous December from the position of chief scout, presided over the team. At the time, mention of Melia (below, right) was invariably prefaced by 'flamboyant', thanks in no small part to his trademark white shoes. *The Guardian* described him as looking "like a *Minder* villain on a trip to Studio 54".

The other reason for his persona was his girlfriend – the model Val Lloyd. "She was a good few years his junior," recalls right-back Chris Ramsey of the unlikely pairing. "It was like the Mrs Merton line: 'What first attracted you to millionaire Paul Daniels?'"

Melia certainly imposed some of that flamboyance on his team that day. The Seagulls turned up in matching cream jackets offset by, of course, white shoes.

"People still talk about the Liverpool Spice Boys," protests Ramsey, "but we were doing that in the '80s. We looked like waiters."

The man who appointed Melia wasn't exactly conventional, either. A property developer and part-time jazz drummer, chairman Mike Bamber thought big and thought free. This was the man who, in 1973, had managed to persuade Brian Clough, a First Division title-winner with Derby County the previous year, to drop down two divisions and take charge at the Goldstone.

Cloughie would later hail Bamber as, "a wealthy, nightclub-owning gem of a man who turned out to be the nicest and best chairman I ever worked for".

The decision to fly to the Twin Towers by chopper might not have been solely Bamber's idea, though he definitely had a significant hand in it. Differing stories suggest either Tony Millard, programme editor for Albion, or British Caledonian's marketing department to be the initial source of the scheme. Either way, it all made perfect sense for the airline, who sponsored the club's shirts at the time.

With the BBC signed up to broadcast a live transmission on the short journey to north London, this was unparalleled exposure for the airline on the cup final edition of *Grandstand*.

The BBC had also nabbed a fantastic spectacle from under the noses of their ITV rivals. Alan Parry, the corporation's roving reporter who was broadcasting live on board the helicopter during the flight, remembers that it was a hell of a coup for the channel.

"There used to be behind-the-scenes wars going on in those days about who could get the first interview and who'd get the scorer of the winning goal," he says. "All kinds of skulduggery went on – it was so competitive."

Not that the success of the operation was a given, however...

"There needed to be two helicopters," reveals Parry. "One taking the Brighton team and one with a camera on board to take shots of the other helicopter in the air. But they had to test this out the day before the cup final.

"The actual helicopter was all the way up in Aberdeen, as it was normally used to ferry people to the oil rigs. So I had to catch a scheduled flight from Heathrow to Aberdeen, then take a taxi out to this remote bloody airfield, climb into a huge helicopter and fly back down again. We rendezvoused with the BBC's helicopter above Wembley Stadium – the irony is that the signal didn't actually work, so we didn't know if it was going to work on cup final day or not."

Once airborne on the Saturday, Parry slowly worked his way backwards down the chopper's aisle, stopping at each row to chew the fat with the Albion players. Spirits were high, which made for easily distracted interviewees.

"Jimmy Case had never been an easy man to do an interview with as he was slightly deaf," chuckles Parry. "And if he was slightly deaf, he was very sarcastic."

There was another problem, though.

"I was working my way back down the rows but the cameraman had trodden on the lead for my earpiece, which had popped out. I couldn't hear the studio. Apparently they were going, 'OK, hand back now.' And then louder. 'For Christ's sake, hand back!' They kept asking but I just kept going. I'd have been talking to the pilot or the stewardesses if they hadn't faded me out..."

During his interview with Parry, Case expressed surprise at how smooth the ride was. If he was on message for the

live TV audience, he reserved his more poetic words for his autobiography.

"Most of the lads had never been in a helicopter," the midfielder penned, "and that could easily have affected them. The last thing you want before an FA Cup final is a dicky tummy and a touch of the trots."

Even if any of Brighton's players had confessed to a Bergkamp-esque fear of flying, non-compliance would not have been tolerated.

"Those were the days when you did what you were told," recalls Ramsey. "Because we were sponsored by British Caledonian, and because of where we were in the country, we used to fly to games a lot anyway."

As it was, the ride distracted from the task at hand. Had they been on a team coach gear-jamming through traffic on the North Circular, nerves would have kicked in. Instead, Albion could just rise above it. Literally.

Butterflies did make an appearance when – shortly before touching down on the pitches of another school – the chopper flew over the iconic stadium.

"It was a fantastic sight to see all of the fans crammed in," explains Parry. "And they responded when they saw the helicopter in the sky. Scarves and banners were waved up at us – it was quite an experience."

Once they were back on terra firma, a short drive took the Seagulls to the Twin Towers. Yet even that trip had an element of the unconventional about it, when Melia asked the after-dinner comedian Bob 'The Cat' Bevan, who'd entertained the players the previous evening before a snooker tournament, to do a turn for them.

Whether the journey suitably relaxed them or not, Brighton put in a spirited performance come kick-off, matching United stride for stride as the showpiece ended 2-2 after extra time. They nearly snatched it at the end too when Smith was put through with just the keeper to beat. "And Smith must score," said the commentator Peter Jones, but the shot was smothered by United's Gary Bailey (above left). For the replay, Albion went to Wembley by bus only to lose 4-0 to Ron Atkinson's men.

But Brighton had inspired others. The following season, when Everton played Watford in the cup final, the Toffees also chose to use an unconventional mode of transport; that morning, they got the train down to London.

And Alan Parry was handed the role of roving reporter again.

"As a lifelong Liverpool fan on a train full of Evertonians, I took out a red scarf to wind them all up. It worked, too..."

**"PEOPLE TALK ABOUT THE LIVERPOOL SPICE BOYS BUT WE WERE DOING THAT IN THE '80s. WE LOOKED LIKE WAITERS"**







The 'McGregor' boot | 1905



Adidas Predator | 2000-01

## THE ARCHIVE

# BOOTS

Every player requires a pair, but how has the humble foot cover evolved from protector to lightweight ball-spanker?



Eddie Shimwell's boots | 1953 FA Cup Final



Children's boots | 1950s



Mitre | 1970s



Tom Finney 'Featherweight' boot | 1950s



England Cerebral Palsy captain Gary Davies' boots | 2005



Adidas | 1980s



# WHAT HAPPENED TO...



**Vegard Heggem**

## Who?

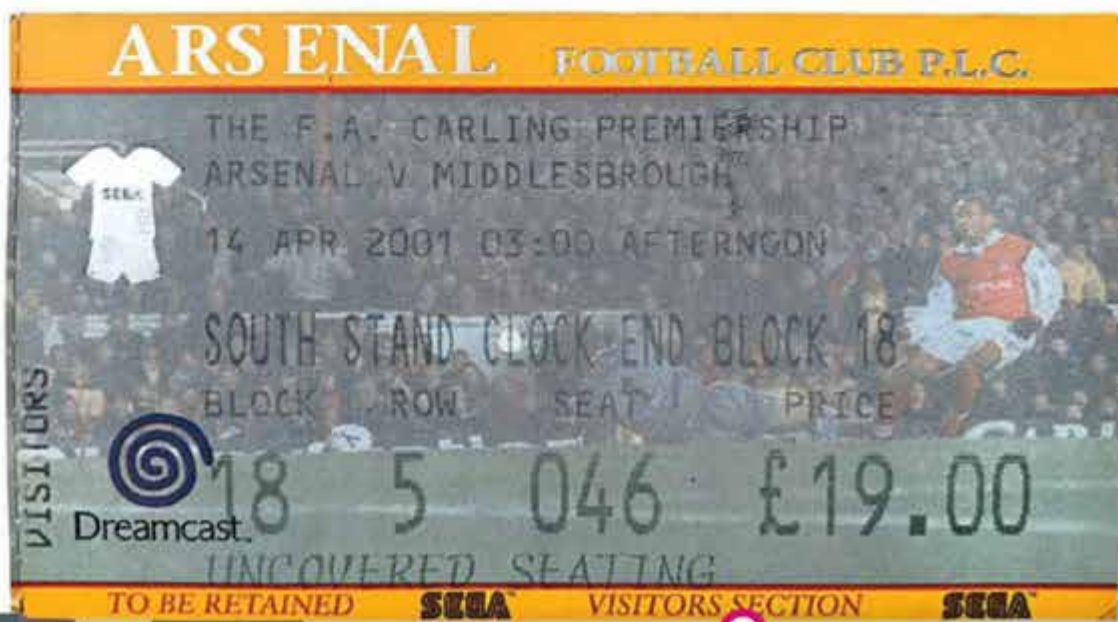
Buccaneering former Liverpool right-back – a regular pick for two terms in the late-90s and the man brought off so Steven Gerrard could make his debut in 1998. Prior to that, Heggem headed the winner at the San Siro for Rosenborg in the Champions League. Injured while playing with Norway at Euro 2000, he retired in '03 at the age of just 28.

## Well that's no age. So what did he do?

He became a salmon fisherman, obviously. Heggem has helmed Aunan Lodge, on the River Orkla's banks in Sor-Trondelag, since persistent hamstring problems ended his playing days. "I can't imagine a better job than being a host for fishermen from all over the world that come here to hunt for Atlantic salmon," he said last October.

## That sounds fishy...

Look, he just loves salmon, all right? "It is a big fighter," he says of the Atlantic kind – his favourite. "If you hook it, your heart pumps straight away. It's so strong."



JUST  
THE  
TICKET

## 0 ARSENAL 3 MIDDLESBROUGH

April 14, 2001  
Premiership

Middlesbrough fan, Louis Dixon

**"I drove down to London from Boro with my dad Ian and best mate Lee. The closer we got to Highbury, the more our optimism grew, and I can even recall Radio 1 predicting a 1-0 win for Middlesbrough."**

In the pub you could feel all of the excitement building and fans belted out Boro songs outside the stadium.

We went 1-0 up and the away end roared, before uniting for a rendition

of 'Ei, Ei, Eio'. Soon it was 2-0 and we sang 'Roll on Valencia', who Arsenal would play in the Champions League the following Tuesday.

During half-time, fans were taking pictures of the scoreboard. 'It won't look like that at full-time,' I thought, expecting the inevitable comeback.

The second half was a bit of a blur, thanks more to an Arsenal onslaught than anything alcohol-related. Just

before the hour, a delicate Alen Boksic backheel fooled Tony Adams, allowing Hamilton Ricard to score with the finest of toe-pokes. No chance would we lose from 3-0 up, surely? Arsenal fans headed to the exits but a few near the away end clapped, saying, 'Enjoy your day.'

When David Seaman took a goal-kick we would all shout, 'Ohhhhhh porn star!' due to his horrendous ponytail.

Right at the death, it could have been four – Dean Windass had an open goal but blazed the ball over the bar. There was still time for Boro anthem 'Pigbag' and a bit of 'Ohh Terry, Terry, Venables'.

The car trip home – back in time to see *Match of the Day* – was silent for several hours before I said, 'Did we just win 3-0 at Highbury?' We were still in total shock – since when do Boro go and do that?!"

## BIZARRE HISTORY OF... QUEEN'S PARK

### PASSING GROOVE

Queen's Park invented passing football. "They dribble little, conveying the ball by a series of long kicks combined with a judicious plan of passing," *The Field* wrote after the 1872 FA Cup semi-final draw with Wanderers.



### AT THE DOUBLE

In 1884 the club came very close to securing a unique double, after Queen's Park became the only Scottish side to reach the FA Cup final. They won the Scottish Cup but then lost 2-1 to Blackburn in Kennington.

### FIRST MINISTER

Goalkeeper Mustafa Mansour – 'The Flying Egyptian' – rejected Celtic for the Spiders in 1936. He'd starred at the World Cup two years earlier for Egypt (led by a Scot in James McRea) and went on to become a cabinet minister in the '60s.

### BITTEN BY THE BUG

Alex Ferguson's debut for Queen's Park was eventful. The teenager scored in a 2-1 defeat to Stranraer in 1958 and was bitten by an opponent. His coach told Fergie to man up at half-time, with the advice: "Bite him back!"

### MADE OF SAND

Ian Durrant (below) snubbed a move to the Spiders after he saw players running up sand dunes. "He was at Hampden for two nights," said legendary boss Eddie Hunter. "The second to say cheerio."





## BEARS ROAR IN BARCELONA

After Celtic lose in the last four of the European Cup, Rangers claim the Cup Winners' Cup in May's Camp Nou final. "Woof! In it goes," screams commentator Archie Macpherson as Colin Stein scores in a 3-2 win over Dynamo Moscow. Willie Johnston's brace proves enough as the Soviets set up a tense finale, but the glory is bittersweet after a pitch invasion causes the trophy ceremony to be scrapped and the 'Barcelona Bears' are later banned from defending their crown.



THIS YEAR IN

# 1972

Cup classics, Congolese delight and a cameo from Mourinho's dad – the 1970s kicked off with a bang

## SANGRIAS ALL ROUND!

Brian Clough leads Derby to a maiden First Division title in May, five years after taking charge of the then second-tier outfit. The Rams are sunning themselves in Majorca as news of their triumph filters through, with title rivals Liverpool and Leeds finishing their league campaigns a week later than County due to fixture congestion. "They played four and half minutes of injury time at Molineux," Clough – who preferred to visit the Isles of Scilly with his parents than Spain – said of Leeds' 2-1 defeat away to Wolves. "It seemed like four and half years."



## A VICTORY FOR INDEPENDENCE

July's final of the Brazil Independence Cup – marking 150 years of Brazilian independence from Portugal – is conveniently won by the hosts against Portugal thanks to a goal from Jairzinho (right). The Republic of Ireland are in a 20-team field, with their group match against Portugal a 'special one' for Jose Manuel Mourinho Felix, Jose's father, who makes his sole international outing.



## TOTAL FOOTBALL 2-0 CATENACCIO

Johan Cruyff's second-half double means Ajax retain the European Cup in May as they see off Inter Milan at De Kuip – the home of domestic rivals Feyenoord. Nerazzurri goalkeeper Ivano Bordon collides into his own defender, Tarcisio Burgnich, to present the easiest of openers to Cruyff, who later powers home a header from a free-kick. With the Eredivisie, KNVB Cup and European Cup secured, Ajax go on to add the Intercontinental Cup and the inaugural UEFA Super Cup to their trophy cabinet. Impressive.



### THE GERMANS GET REVENGE

West Germany return to Wembley for the first time since the 1966 World Cup Final in April and humble England 3-1 in qualifying for the summer's European Championship finals. A star showing from Gunter Netzer prompts Franz Beckenbauer (below, right) to enthuse afterwards: "I've never shared in a finer West German performance – the moves, idea and execution all happened." Two months later they win the Euros, and two years after that the World Cup as well.



### KINGS OF AFRICA

Congo lift the Africa Cup of Nations for the first time in March. Ousting host nation Cameroon in the semis, the Red Devils trail in the final to a Mali side who'd drawn all three of their group games, but hit back with three goals in seven minutes. Francois M'Pele (above) is named the tournament's top performer and becomes a star at Paris Saint-Germain, though the winning strike in the final is his last goal for his country.

### "NOW TUDOR'S GONE DOWN FOR NEWCASTLE..."

Non-league Hereford cause one of the FA Cup's greatest giant-killings in February and thrust young BBC commentator John Motson into the spotlight. A mud-caked Edgar Street cannot stage the third-round replay against First Division Newcastle until fourth-round day. Malcolm Macdonald appears to have finally halted the Bulls' charge, but Ronnie Radford's rocket and Ricky George's extra-time strike spark Parka-clad pitch invasions. "It could have gone in the car park," Yorkshireman Radford said of his screamer. "As soon as I hit it, I was on me way."



## WHAT ELSE HAPPENED IN 1972?

British soldiers kill 14 people in Bogside, Derry on 'Bloody Sunday'

Former king Edward VIII dies, 35 years after his abdication

Five men arrested for wire-tapping and burglary at Watergate complex

The first official Gay Pride march is held in London

Jesus Christ Superstar debuts on West End

JAN 30 MAY 28 JUN 17 JUL 1 AUG 9

THE RICHTER SCALE OF NEWS



Number of directors who turned down the job on *The Godfather*, prior to Francis Ford Coppola being given the gig. Paramount's executives tried, and failed, to replace him numerous times. It remains a cinematic masterpiece today.



- 📺 **Emmerdale**
- 📺 **Mastermind**
- 📺 **Are You Being Served?**



# FOOTBALL'S FISHING REVOLUTIONARY

Raymond Kopa lifted league titles, European Cups and the Ballon d'Or, but his greatest legacy to the game was as its most formidable activist







**R**aymond Kopa learned early on that he was an outsider. Born in 1931 to Polish immigrant parents drawn from Krakow to France's industrial north to work down the mines, as a teen he discovered his name made him a second-class citizen.

"I visited five or six electricians and introduced myself the same way every time," he remembered of his attempts to earn an apprenticeship in the 1940s. "I would say, 'Good day, I'd like to be an electrician.' They'd reply, 'Great, what's your name?' 'Raymond Kopaszewski...'

"Immediately, the smile disappeared and the countenance hardened. 'I am sorry, we don't have anything.' So I had to give up on my dreams."

In post-war France, Poles were seen as good for heaving coal but little else. They came to help a nation depleted of manpower after the Second World War, but were hardly welcomed in the bleak landscape of Nord-Pas-de-Calais. Down the pits, the newcomers' role was to do jobs the locals didn't much fancy, often scraping fuel fragments from the floor.

Kopa, his name shortened at school to make it easier for French people to pronounce, soon worked with his dad and almost died as a result.

Aged 16, while pushing a cart along a deep shaft, the ceiling cracked and rocks tumbled upon him. He escaped with just a severed finger and wouldn't work well with his hands again. Luckily, there was magic in his feet.

But as Raymond progressed through a sublime football career, the injustices experienced in his youth never left him. He went on to become one of the most remarkable players in European history, but perhaps the most incredible thing of all about Kopa was that his off-field actions were just as notable.

Imagine Leo Messi crossed with union agitator Bob Crow or a game-changing revolutionary like Jimmy Hill with Johan Cruyff's talent, and you are some way to conceiving France's sporting maverick.

Kopa's firebrand nature grew through football. As with England's North East,



**IMAGINE A GAME-CHANGER LIKE JIMMY HILL WITH CRUYFF'S TALENT AND YOU GET AN IDEA OF FRANCE'S SPORTING MAVERICK**

French mining firms played a key role in the development of sport and political activism. Clubs recruited workers, and the Poles could play: in the 1948 French Cup Final between Lille and Lens, nine starters were of Polish origin.

Kopa was an obvious prospect. "I was always playing one age category above my own," he stated. But his personality marked him out. An aggressive player who loved to dribble, he was dismissed as "too much of an individualist or too bolshie". Whether through his attitude or politics remains unclear.

He played for Noeux-les-Mines, in the French third tier, aged 17. The president was also chief engineer at the mine, yet Kopa noted bitterly that he "did nothing to help my football career." As a result, he missed out on joining a powerhouse club, as his talent justified, and had to settle for a Second Division side in 1949. "I thought I would get a contract from one of the big northern teams – Lille or Lens," he recalled. "I was disappointed when Angers made me the only offer."

Two seasons of stellar performances would eventually secure him a transfer to Stade de Reims – then the best team in France. There, he ran riot. Just 5ft 6in, Raymond was a Stanley Matthews-style wizard of the dribble, deceiving players with ease and supplying pinpoint passes. He pulled the strings as Reims won the title twice, in 1953 and '55.

During a 1955 international friendly which France were expected to lose to Spain, Kopa equalised before creating the winner in Madrid, making the wider world sit up and take notice. "He is the Napoleon of football," wrote the British journalist Desmond Hackett.

His brilliance guided Reims to the first ever European Cup final in 1956, where they were beaten 4-3 by Real Madrid in Paris. Raymond had already agreed to join Real the following season – making him the first Frenchman to play abroad – but fought hard for Reims at the Parc des Princes to avoid any accusations of favouring his new employers.

"I left the second best team in Europe to join the best team of all time," Kopa later explained, and few could dispute the majesty of his Madrid team-mates.

He felt Brazil in 1970 were the only XI in football history finer than their side. "The media call Real Madrid Galacticos," he stated in 2011, "but I do believe we were a better team. We had the greats: Ferenc Puskas, Alfredo Di Stefano [both top left with Kopa] and Francisco Gento, with an excellent defence in Marquitos, Juan Santisteban and Jose Santamaria."

Kopa was central to three consecutive European Cup triumphs and also widely considered the best player at the 1958 World Cup – which featured Pele – even though France eventually fell to Brazil in the semi-finals. Raymond laid on many

of Just Fontaine's record-smashing 13 goals – the two were room-mates and had a relationship often described as telepathic – and he went on to scoop the Ballon d'Or in 1958.

It proved to be Kopa's zenith. In '59, he returned to Reims where he'd reap two more league titles.

However, it was here that the political animal in Kopa would properly emerge. In 1963, the midfielder co-founded the French Players' Union – annoyed at the lack of say that he and his team-mates had in their own freedom of movement. French clubs held 'property rights' over players until they were 34: their ability to choose a transfer often only arrived when they were well past their prime.

"Players are slaves," he said during his campaigns. "The professional footballer is the only man who can still be bought and sold without consent." Authorities became agitated, and Kopa was given a six-month playing ban.

It didn't deter him, though. In 1968, with industrial unrest sweeping across Europe, France came to a standstill as more than 10 million workers went on strike. In Paris, nearly a million students and workers marched, desperate for an end to Charles de Gaulle's authoritarian rule, and for increased pay and hours.

Leading a small band of professional footballers was Kopa. And the pressure worked – settlements were eventually made across the board and, by '69, the system changed to favour footballers. The UNFP Players' Union gave contract rights back to players. Kopa had helped force one of his most famous victories.

Raymond remained inventive for the rest of his life, developing his very own sportswear brand as well as marketing all manner of products such as clothes and fruit juice. All the while, he indulged his lifetime's greatest passion: fishing. Nowhere was Kopa more content than on a remote lake with rod in hand (left).

He died in March this year, aged 85. His impact was so vast, *L'Equipe* chose to dedicate its first 15 pages to Kopa's legacy. *France Football* rank only Michel Platini and Zinedine Zidane – perhaps not coincidentally, sons of immigrants too – as better players.

In 1970, Kopa had been the first ever footballer to earn the Legion d'Honneur: quite the journey for someone who had initially started with nothing. And he never forgot his roots.

His father and brother had both died early from the miner's disease silicosis, but over his long life workers' rights had improved. "Today's professionals have an easier time," said Kopa in retirement, and it was in no small part down to him.





**DID YOU KNOW?** Ex-QPR player and boss Gerry Francis is a keen pigeon fancier. He was an advisor for *Valiant* – an animated film on pigeons in the Second World War

## THE CLASSICS

### Side By Side

"We've had a few battles together," says Peter Shilton to Ray Clemence in a Euro 80 keeper duet. "Singing our song, side by side," they croon in the chorus, fooling no one whatsoever.



### Naranjito

What says 'Spain' more than a football kit-wearing smiley, plump orange? Er, nothing, and that's why Naranjito was the mascot for the '82 World Cup. *Old!*



### Sock tie-ups

In the modern era of tape and elasticated sock top, the humble tie-up has fallen by the wayside. Never better designed than the 'numbered' ones worn by Chelsea and Leeds during the '70s.



# FIGHT CLUB



**KEVIN KEEGAN**  
LIVERPOOL



**BILLY BREMNER**  
LEEDS UNITED

WEMBLEY, AUGUST 1974

## PREVIOUS

Clean card. Lost out to gravity in falling off his bike on 1976 BBC athletics show *Superstars*, slicing his back into ribbons. Often feisty, he would've loved it if he'd beaten them in 1996 as Newcastle boss.

Where do you start? Collared by Spurs' Dave Mackay in '66 for being "a bully", Bremner led 'Dirty Leeds' with gusto. Banned for life by Scotland in '75 over an alleged fight in a Danish nightclub.

## BUILD-UP

Early Charity Shield fisticuffs as Tommy Smith hacks Allan Clarke on the sideline. Kev clattered into Bremner after an hour before chasing Johnny Giles and getting a right hook to the face for his troubles.

Bremner & Co. were also fighting their new boss. A harsh critic of predecessor Don Revie, Brian Clough had told Leeds' players "to put your medals in the bin because you've won them by cheating".

## HANDBAGS

Giles was only booked. Bremner punched Keegan in the kidney and the Reds' No.7 retaliated with a swift haymaker. Leeds' supporters chanted: "You're going to get your f\*\*king head kicked in." Feisty stuff.

Despite tolerated on-pitch warfare, both got red cards in Wembley's first Charity Shield. Disgusted, Bremner and Keegan discarded their shirts, trudging down the tunnel topless. Cue much criticism.

## THEY SAID

"Keegan was a victim, not a culprit," said Clough later, having lasted 44 days in the hot seat at Elland Road. "Bremner kicked him just about everywhere – up the arse, in the balls. I understood the frustration."

"Bremner threw his shirt petulantly to the ground," wrote *The Times*, "where it lay crumpled like a shot seagull until cleared away by the linesman. It was a disgusting scene, the volcanic climax."

AND THE WINNER IS...

**DRAW!**

Both received 11-game bans (three for the red cards, another eight for removing their shirts). "Players must learn that they cannot throw punches at each other," huffed spoilsport FA secretary Ted Croker.

## MATCH REPORT

### 10,000 At Ladies' Match

Lancashire Evening Post  
December 26, 1917

"There were 10,000 people at Deepdale yesterday afternoon at the ladies football match between two teams representing the munition workers from Dick, Kerr's and Coulthard's.

The players all wore orthodox tops, shorts and boots. Coulthard's were in red and white stripes and Dick, Kerr's in black and white – with the addition of natty hats to match. Corsets were barred. There was a tendency amongst the players at the start to giggle, but they soon settled down to the game in earnest.

Dick, Kerr's weren't long in showing that they had the better all-round idea of the game and a number of their shots would not have disgraced a regular professional.

Within five minutes Dick, Kerr's had scored through Miss Whittle, and added goals by Miss Birken – a shot from 15 yards – and Miss Rance.

Coulthard's 'bucked up' after the interval and deserved a goal, but it was denied. On the other hand, Dick, Kerr's added to their score with Miss Rance netting."

A (slightly sexist) take on Dick, Kerr's Ladies' Christmas Day debut.





# PERFORMANCE

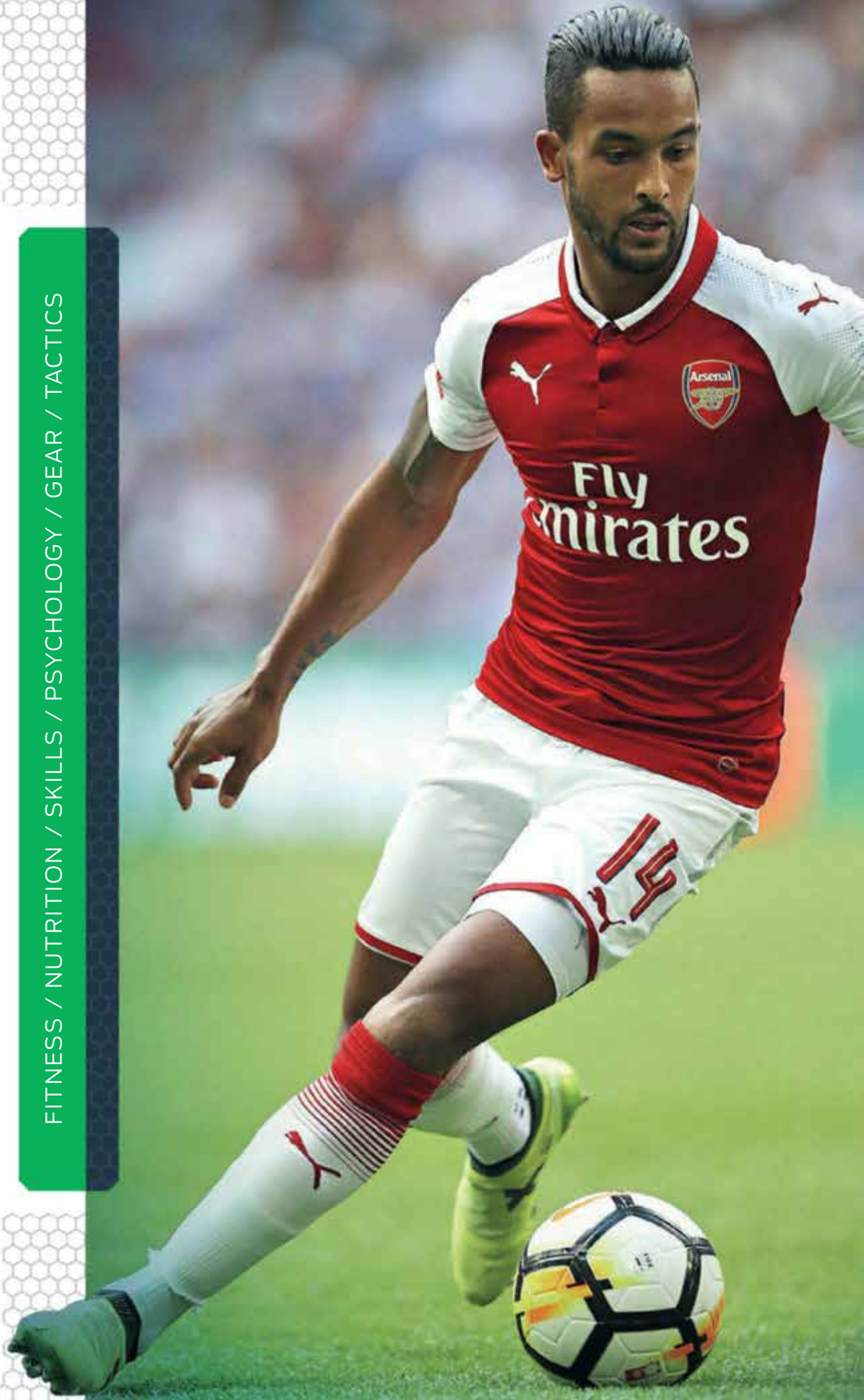
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# PERFORMANCE

FITNESS / NUTRITION / SKILLS / PSYCHOLOGY / GEAR / TACTICS





## MASTERCLASS

## THEO WALCOTT

Arsenal's speed demon explains the secret training sessions he uses that have supercharged his game

**Hi Theo. How vital is extra training to staying fit and fast for a full season?**

I think it's important to always stay one step ahead of everyone else. If you can find a way to improve your game by one per cent, then you are going to have an advantage over your opponent. As you get older you need to take care of your body, as you can feel the intensity of the Premier League improving after every season. The younger players are all physically able to compete and that makes it even more competitive for a place in the team. You have to make sure you're always fit and ready to go.

**Players often post images of their workout sessions on social media – does that provide competition?**

I'm someone who isn't too bothered about what other people are doing. I'm good at just focusing on myself and making sure that I do the little things right. If you are professional and do everything properly on the training field, in the gym and outside of the club, things will fall in place. I like to have my week planned out, so I know when I head into a game I haven't cut any corners. But there is definitely a bit of competition when you see the other players doing workouts on social media – sometimes you will see a coach using one of your drills. It's all fun and games.

**Do you include any additional sprint work in your daily training routines?**

After I'd ruptured my anterior cruciate ligament [against Spurs in 2014] I was introduced to a sprint coach. I felt that was the first thing I needed to look at. Speed is a huge part of my game – I'm never going to be an endurance runner – and I was keen to make sure I didn't lose my pace. I often do footwork drills with ladders or reaction sessions using cones to retain sharpness. When I was young I tried to do 100-metre running at county level, but my technique was nowhere near that of trained sprinters. I never really got the chance to work on it, but who knows – maybe I would have been a sprinter if I'd carried on with it?

**You turned 28 in March having agreed to join Arsenal at 16. Have you had to modify training as you've got older?**

I have always done quite a lot of work away from the training ground, so I'm continuing to do all of the right things. I've worked with a personal trainer on my core strength, because I've always believed that was a weakness of mine. I also spend some time in cryotherapy chambers and ice baths, while various stretching exercises help me to recover from training sessions and matches as quickly as possible. They definitely help because I very rarely have aching legs afterwards, so I'm capable of playing in a game once every two or three days.

"Last season, I tried to pick on Harry Maguire who is about twice my size, so I don't mind getting stuck in"

**With a couple of young kids at home now, is your recovery regime affected?**

Not too much. I'm quite lucky because normally they sleep through the night and wake up at about 5.30am. I get up with them and once I'm up, I'm up, so I don't go back to bed or anything like that. Once I'm in my car and heading off for training, my focus is all on that, and then when I go back home again I'm a dad. Having kids is really good; they're a healthy distraction from football and it means I can switch off from the game.

**Do you think you need a nasty streak to play at the highest level nowadays?**

Yes and no. I'm the type of person who will be aggressive when I need to be – and that's when I play my best football. Last season, I tried to pick on Hull City defender Harry Maguire (below) who is twice my size, so I don't mind getting stuck in. I'll take my fair share of kicks but always get straight back up again. The opposition hate that as they know they can't affect you mentally. I like to use my body more on the pitch these days, because I feel stronger physically and have got a lot of power in my legs.

**Footballers can get plenty of stick on social media – how important is it to block it out and be mentally strong?**

That's just the way the world is today. People like to comment on everything but, to be honest, I don't really see any of it. One of the most important things is to listen to all of the people around you, such as family, your coaches and your own thoughts, too. I do what I do for me. I don't worry about opinions of others who know nothing about me.

**You have played as both a striker and wideman for Arsenal – have modern players got to be tactically versatile?**

I think so, yes. Around 10-15 years ago everybody in England played in a 4-4-2 formation. However, now there is more variety, which means you've got to be able to adapt. When I first started out with Southampton I was a forward in a 4-4-2 system. I learned a lot from watching people like Michael Owen and Emile Heskey – they had a great big man, little man partnership at Liverpool. I have played in quite a few positions since I joined Arsenal, but I think the right wing is where I will feature the most this season.

Theo Walcott wears the adidas X 17+ Purespeed – for more information, visit [www.adidas.co.uk](http://www.adidas.co.uk) or follow @adidasUK on social media

## THE DETAILS

The Gunners' sprint ace on films, food & his toughest full-back foe



**If you could play with one player past or present...**  
Dennis Bergkamp

**Last movie you watched?**  
Moana

**Which actor would play you in a film?**  
Will Smith – even though he is quite a bit taller than me!

**Favourite music artist?**  
Usher

**Selfie or autograph?**  
Autograph

**Favourite holiday destination?**  
Anywhere nice with the family

**Best defender you have faced?**  
Patrice Evra

**If you weren't a footballer...**  
I'd be a 100m or 200m runner

**Favourite meal?**  
My wife's lasagne the day before a big game. It's beautiful





# LIKE A PRO

Premier League strength and conditioning coach, Matthew Willmott, rates players' Instagram pics

## 1 Kiko Casilla @realmadrid

"The deadlift is an important exercise for increasing maximal strength," says Willmott. "It targets the 'posterior chain' – the lower back, glutes and hamstrings – but will work most of the muscles, too."

## 2 Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain @liverpoolfc

"Using hurdles is a good way to boost the mobility of muscles around the hip and pelvis, such as the groins and glutes."

## 3 Patrice Evra @patrice.evra

"The aim here is to improve basic leg speed, to gain more power, although wall-sits are an easier way of doing this."

## 4 Gary Cahill @england

"Explosive medical ball throws boost power and speed. Throwing it up will work the triple extension position, which is often used in sprinting and jumping."

## 5 Danny Welbeck @england

"This will advance maximum velocity technique and the ability to maintain the correct running style at top speeds."

## 6 Pape Souare @square23

"Most football actions use one leg so building up single-leg strength is key. Side-to-side knee movement cannot be excessive as you squat down, however."

## 7 Lewis Baker @matchfit\_conditioning

"Poles can improve a player's change of direction. By teaching correct body positions, you can make gains in agility."

## 8 Mesut Özil @matchfit\_conditioning

"Hurdle jumps – a form of plyometric training – develop force, to enhance speed and power. This also aids landing technique, to reduce the risk of injuries."



1 2  
3 4

5 6  
7 8



T R I E D AND T E S T E D

# PLAYERTEK SMART VEST

FFT finds out if we're Premier League fit by putting some wearable tech to the test



#### ▲ Ben Woodburn

After belting in Wales' winning goal at home to Austria, the starlet was praised by David Hasselhoff on Twitter.

#### ▲ Frickley Athletic

The use of Pokemon Go-style tech in their programme enables fans to watch match highlights via an app.

#### ▲ Nike

The Vapor Flyknit Ultra boots are a throwback to FFT's youth. If only we had a spare £210.

## HERO TO ZERO

#### ▼ Wayne Rooney

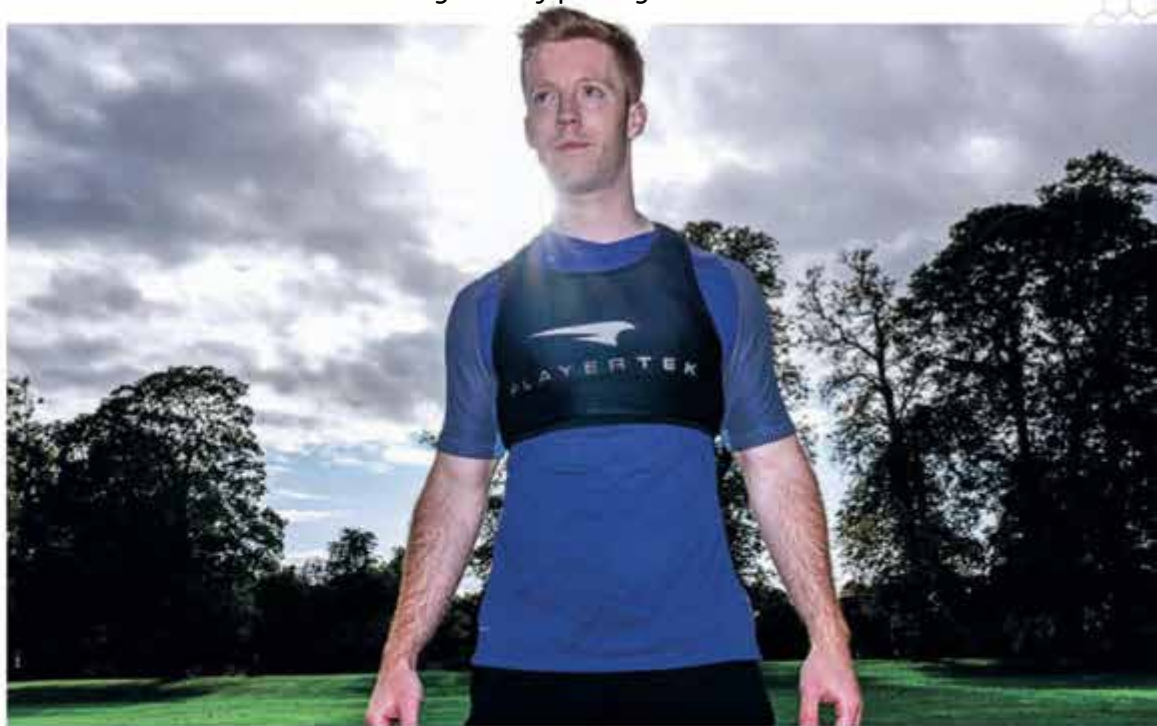
A drink-driving charge following a night out ruined the forward's fresh start at Everton.

#### ▼ FIFA

They wouldn't agree to ratify Adrien Silva's switch from Sporting to Leicester after the transfer deadline was missed by 14 seconds.

#### ▼ David Silva's hair

FFT can't get used to the Man City man's new 'Pep Guardiola' haircut this season – bring back the lovely flowing locks, David.



#### What is it?

A GPS-powered fitness tracker that has been designed by wearable tech giants Catapult Sports. The kit can determine distance covered, sprint distance, peak speed and total number of sprints, and then compares your results with that of pro players. So FFT decided to strap one on and find out how our fitness stacks up against the game's leading names.

#### How does it work?

A pod is activated by pressing a circular power button, with a green light telling you it is charged and primed for action. Then simply slot the small device inside a black vest – that looks and feels more like a sports bra – and you can kick off. After full-time, swiftly transfer all of the data, using Bluetooth, to an iPhone app.

#### Who uses it?

Catapult Sports provide wearable tech to more than 1,250 clubs over a range of different sports including the Premier League's last two champions, Chelsea

and Leicester, as well as Tottenham Hotspur. Now they are keen to help amateur players take their game up a level – FFT's Sunday League outfit will soon be amongst the converted.

#### Why are they using it?

The vest enables players to pinpoint which areas of fitness they'll need to improve. One of the tools allows you to compare your data from the first and second halves to see how much you tire as the match goes on. After a 60-minute runout, FFT is informed that we are operating at 17 per cent of a professional player's attributes, but we weren't really trying, honest.

#### How much does it cost?

Catapult have priced their tech vest at £199, although the free app is only available on iPhones at the moment. Not cheap, but it'll cost you no more than a new pair of football boots and it could boost your game and health. We think that it is money well spent.







## “Why won’t Ronaldo like me?”

A new social media platform allows players to chat in private and locate experts to boost their game

**When you are a multi-millionaire football star boasting a multi-million social media following, sometimes you just want to kick back and chat with your mates away from the public’s prying eyes.**

Well, now the game’s high-profile players can do exactly that. The Canadian firm Viktre has launched a social media platform which allows active and retired athletes to like dog videos, share memes or simply chew the fat until their heart’s content.

Of course, the software has got a serious purpose (honest). The idea is that footballers will network with other players, publish their own customised features and also become acquainted with respected personnel in the sport, for example physios and strength and conditioning coaches, who they can contact in their hour of need.

Viktre founder Al Steele said: “Whether it’s training photographs from an active player, business advice from an ex-footballer, social

commentary from a former Olympic medalist or a video posted by an NBA All-Star, the aim of Viktre is for these athletes to connect and tell stories in their words.”

More than 3,000 of them have since signed up including two World Cup winners in Kaka and David Villa, currently at MLS duo Orlando City and New York City respectively. Fans can get involved too by registering at [viktre.com](http://viktre.com) and reading content from players which isn’t available anywhere else.

### YOU ASK

**Is it easy making the switch from player to coach?**  
**Ryan Fetton**  
via Twitter

### HE ANSWERS



**Kevin Phillips**

Derby County coach

“As a player you’re selfish and think just about yourself. You will come in and go home and then turn up for matches. But as a coach, the big thing I’ve found is you’ve got to think about everyone. The organisation side of it is incredible – as a player everything is organised, but you don’t see the hours that go into it. I used to train from 10am until 12pm. Now it is an 8am start and some days you may not leave until 5pm.”

Interview and Viktre words: Alesc Fenn

## YOU NEED TO FOLLOW

Refine your timeline thanks to three of the top football and fitness profiles from FFT’s feed



**BENJAMIN MENDY**  
Footballer banter

The Man City man is establishing a big following with his witty one-liners and wisecracks at his Blues team-mates.

**Twitter:** @benmendy23



**CLASSIC FOOTBALL CFS**  
Vintage shirts

Relive your cul-de-sac kickabouts as a kid by getting your hands on some iconic replica kit from years gone by.

**Twitter:** @classicshirts



**JOHNNY WILSON**  
Fitness insight

The head of sports medicine at Notts County posts videos of cutting-edge methods that get players match fit.

**Twitter:** @notts\_physio



HOW  
TO...BOOST YOUR  
BALANCE

Injury prevention expert, Sharon Heidari pour, used this yoga routine with the Arsenal and Chelsea stars – try it for yourself to improve strength and flexibility

### + Tree pose

Are you no stranger to feeling a decade older when crawling out of bed the day after a game? Make this move a part of your pre-match warm-up. "Footballers will often suffer from stiff hips after years of jumping, kicking and turning on the dominant side," explains Heidari pour. "Hold this position for around 15-20 seconds, then repeat it with your opposite leg to open up your groin and hip."



### + Standing pigeon

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Nope, it's a handy yoga pose designed to get your body working in sync. "Football operates in three planes of movement – side to side, up and down, and rotational – and yoga is the same. This will aid your strength, balance, mobility and flexibility."



### + Half moon pose

If you can master this move, you will soon be able to slalom past defenders without falling flat on your face. Ace. "Ensure you are in perfect alignment, so your arm and leg are in a straight line. This will improve your balance on one leg – which you're going to need for almost every action in a match – as well as activating glute muscles."



### + Warrior III pose

We don't want any nasty muscle injuries ruining your season, so listen up and add this to your training regime. "This aims to enhance balance and strength on your standing leg and switches on your glutes. Moving your leg forwards and kicking through mimics exactly what happens during a match. It's perfect to do before a game."



### + Single-leg side plank pose

We have had enough of you making excuses for getting bullied off the ball. This exercise will boost your ability to retain possession and then make a pass. "I used this move a lot with Mesut Özil. It replicated him pushing away an opponent, while lifting his leg in a football-specific fashion helped to strengthen his groin."





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## FEATURED STORY

# CR7 CHAPTER 5

On 6 July, 2009, 24-year-old Cristiano Ronaldo arrived in Madrid to join his new team. Already a three-time Premier League and Champions League winner, CR7 was about to take his game to even greater heights at the Bernabeu.

The design of his Chapter 5: Cut to Brilliance boots is a nod to a rough diamond being shaped into a sparkling gem. The upper reflects light, making the boots shine bright just like Ronaldo has on the biggest stages.

Signature details include “El Sueño del niño”, which translates as “The dream of a kid”, etched on the heel along with the date he was unveiled as a galactico in front of 75,000 Madridistas. A graphic on the sockliner acknowledges him as the fastest player in the club's history to reach 50, 150, 200 and 250 league goals as well as scoring against every team.



NIKE MERCURIAL SUPERFLY V DF CR7 FG

QR: 163752 - £270

## NEW RELEASES

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Nike Tottenham Hotspur 17/18  
3rd Shirt  
QR: 159708 - £60



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## NEW RELEASES

# BOOTROOM

Whatever your game and wherever you play, Pro:Direct has all the best boots from the biggest brands including an exclusive new Copa Gloro inspired by the rare blue Predator Mania.



Umbro Velocita III Pro FG  
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adidas Copa Gloro 17 FG  
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PUMA One 17.1 FG  
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Nike Hypervenom Phantom III DF FG  
QR: 160650 - **£250**



New Balance Visaro 2.0 FG  
QR: 164979 - **£180**



adidas Nemeziz 17+ 360 Agility FG  
QR: 157203 - **£280**



Under Armour Spotlight FG  
QR: 158290 - **£160**



Mizuno Rebula V1 Japan MD  
QR: 156068 - **£260**



Umbro Speciali Eternal Pro FG  
QR: 162687 - **£110**

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# KEEPERS

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QR: 156131 - **£55**



Nike FC Barcelona 17/18 3rd  
Vapor Match Shirt  
QR: 159604 - **£100**



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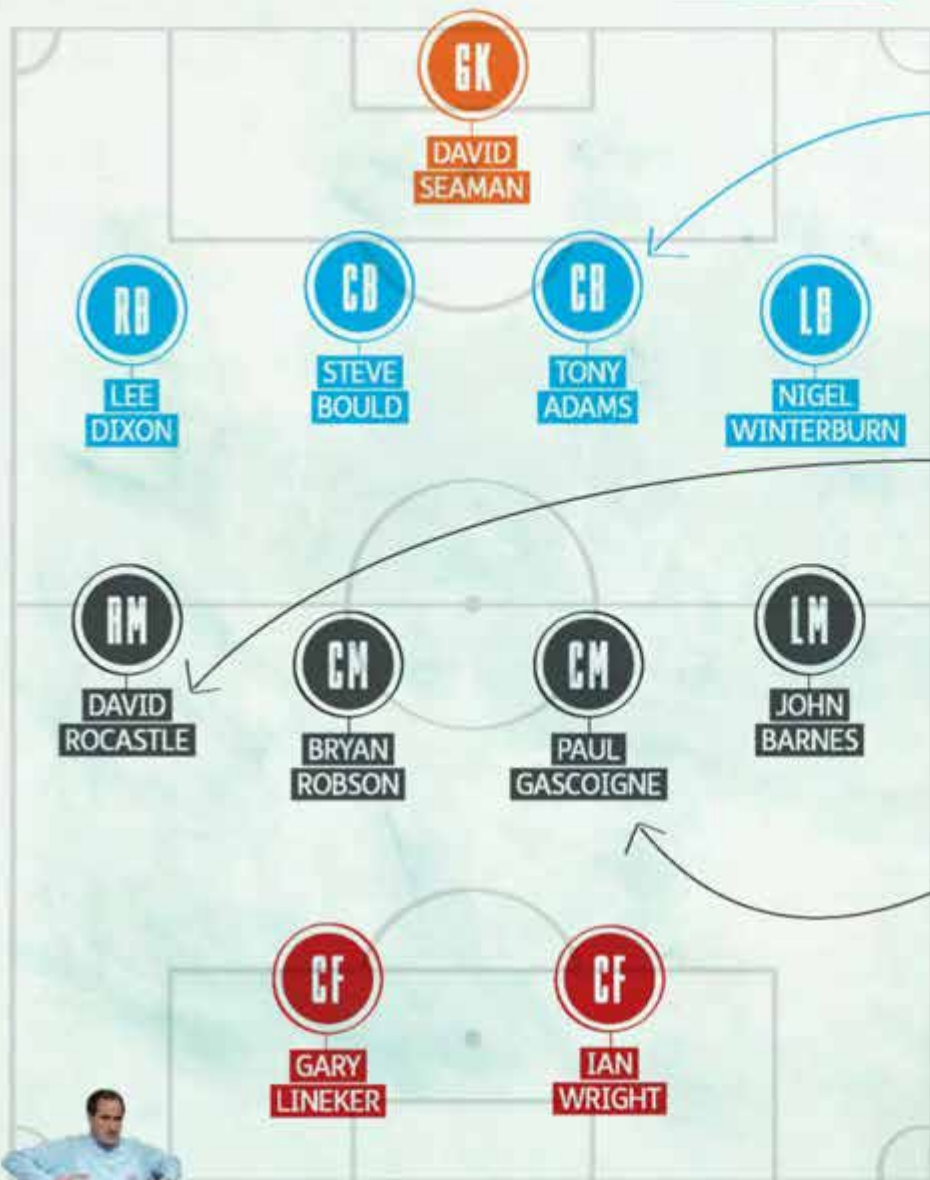
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## MY PERFECT XI

# ALAN SMITH

The goal poacher-turned-microphone botherer names the best he shared a pitch with while playing for Leicester, Arsenal and England



### TONY ADAMS

"I'll never forget when Tony was named the captain of Arsenal, succeeding Kenny Sansom. He was only 21 at the time and we all thought, 'Blimey, that is one hell of a call from the gaffer.' But he'd acted like a captain from the age of about 12 and he took it on without any problems whatsoever. Plus, you only had to play against him for five minutes in training to realise what a great player Tony was."



### DAVID ROCASTLE

"He had the heart of a lion, the skills of a Brazilian and tackled like a rhino: he was the complete package. Rocky was never quite the same after his knee operation, but in the early days he was a wonderful player and everybody loved him. He was exceptional the night we won the league at Anfield in 1989. I will never forget him winning a free-kick, getting back up and pumping his fist, with his eyes and teeth gleaming. He had a desire to win. It was from that set-piece I scored the opener."



### PAUL GASCOIGNE

"I played alongside him for England in his peak years – Gazza had such confidence. He was so proud after his first England goal, saying: 'If I don't do anything else in my career, I've scored for my country at Wembley.' He also hit that incredible free-kick for Tottenham against Arsenal in the 1991 FA Cup semi-final. It whizzed right past my ear and I looked over my shoulder to see it fly in the top corner."

Sky Sports is the home of football, with 126 Premier League games and 127 Sky Bet EFL matches shown live in 2017-18.

Interview Chris Flanagan



## THE GAFFER

### GEORGE GRAHAM

"A demanding boss who got the best out of players. He was a clever tactician – we won the Cup Winners' Cup because he adjusted his formation for Europe."

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PETER SHILTON

02

TERRY BUTCHER

03

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